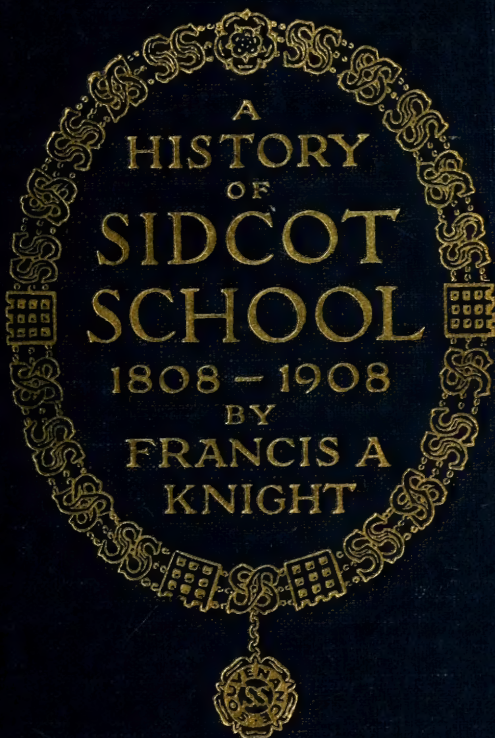


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A  
HISTORY  
OF  
SIDCOT  
SCHOOL

1808 — 1908

BY  
FRANCIS A  
KNIGHT

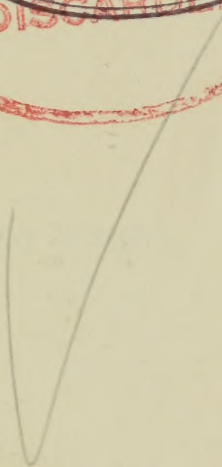
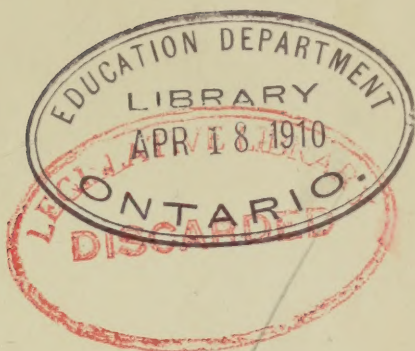





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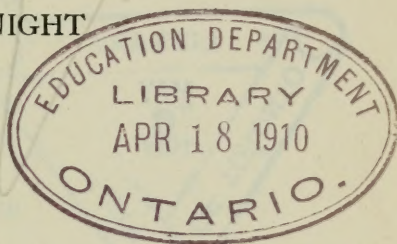
SIDCOT SCHOOL IN 1908.

A HISTORY  
OF  
**SIDCOT SCHOOL**

A HUNDRED YEARS OF  
WEST COUNTRY  
QUAKER EDUCATION

1808-1908

BY  
FRANCIS A. KNIGHT



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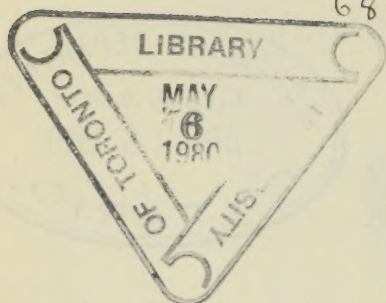
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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
OLD SCHOOLS AT SIDCOT . . . . .	I

## CHAPTER II

SIDCOT A PUBLIC SCHOOL . . . . .	20
----------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III

EARLY DAYS . . . . .	42
----------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV

SCHOOL-LIFE FROM 1808-1821 . . . . .	54
--------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER V

WILLIAM BATT, 1821-1839 . . . . .	77
-----------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI

BENJAMIN G. GILKES, 1839-1846 . . . . .	110
---	-----

## CHAPTER VII

JOHN EDEY VEALE, 1846-1847; JOHN FRANK, 1847-1852; MARTIN LIDBETTER, 1852-1853 . . . . .	133
---	-----

## CHAPTER VIII

HENRY DYMOND, 1854-1865 . . . .	PAGE 158
---------------------------------	-------------

## CHAPTER IX

JOSIAH EVANS, 1865-1873 . . . .	206
---------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER X

EDMUND ASHBY, 1873-1902 . . . .	245
---------------------------------	-----

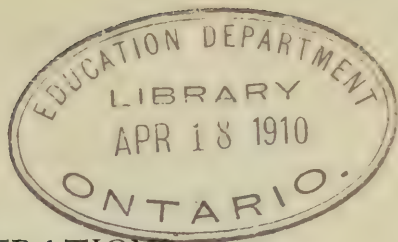
## CHAPTER XI

BEVAN LEAN, D.SC., B.A., 1902 . . . .	304
---------------------------------------	-----

---

EPILOGUE . . . . .	331
--------------------	-----

INDEX . . . . .	337
-----------------	-----



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SIDCOT SCHOOL IN 1908, ITS HUNDREDTH YEAR	<i>Coloured Frontispiece</i>
THE OLD MEETING HOUSE OF 1718 . . . . .	PAGE 19
JOHN BENWELL . . . . .	TO FACE PAGE 24
PLAN OF THE SIDCOT ESTATE IN 1815 . . . . .	36
THE SCHOOLS OF 1808 AND 1809 . . . . .	38
WILLIAM BATT . . . . .	77
ONE OF THE "COFFINS" . . . . .	81
BARTON DELL . . . . .	92
PLAN OF THE SIDCOT ESTATE IN 1848 . . . . .	101
GROUND PLAN OF SCHOOL IN 1838 . . . . .	102
WILL'AM DAY . . . . .	129
HENRY DYMOND . . . . .	158
JOSIAH EVANS . . . . .	206
THEODORE COMPTON . . . . .	230
EDMUND ASHBY . . . . .	245
THE SCHOOL FRONT . . . . .	264

	TO FACE PAGE
DR WADE . . . . .	282
THE OLD PLAYING-SHED . . . . .	288
DR BEVAN LEAN . . . . .	304
THE NEW APPROACH TO THE SCHOOL . . . . .	306
NATURE STUDY . . . . .	313
THE WORKSHOP . . . . .	317
THE ART ROOM . . . . .	318
SCHOOL ESTATE AT SIDCOT, 1908 . . . . .	322
GROUND PLAN OF THE SCHOOL IN 1908 . . . . .	324
SCHOLARS AND STAFF IN THE SCHOOL'S HUNDREDTH YEAR . . . . .	326



# A HISTORY OF SIDCOT SCHOOL

## CHAPTER I

### OLD SCHOOLS AT SIDCOT

THE sources from which the materials for "A History of Sidcot School" have been drawn consist primarily of the School records, comprising the Minute-books of the Committee and of the General Meeting, the volume of Annual Reports on the state of the School, and the long series of cash-books and ledgers. The Minute-books both of the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, and the archives of the Society at Devonshire House, have furnished valuable information; local tradition has added some picturesque and interesting touches; while the personal recollections of the compiler extend over a period of little less than fifty years. Much assistance has also been given by old scholars and teachers, whose reminiscences, beginning with those of Mary Ricketts,—who, as Mary Frank, came to Sidcot as far back as 1818, and who died in 1906 in the hundredth year of her age,—and coming down to a time about twenty years ago, will, it is hoped, be found to lend some life and colour to what might otherwise have proved a too staid and sober chronicle.

It may here be added that, in addition to Mary Ricketts, four old scholars who had helped the compiler with recollections of their school-days have died while the work was in progress. James Clark, Sir Richard Tangye, and Joseph S. Gilpin were old scholars in two senses, and had all

passed the three-score years and ten. But Harry Vaughan Clark, who was one of the writer's own boys, was only forty-eight at the time of his death in the autumn of 1907.

But although in these recollections, some of which are most vivid and picturesque, the writer has had at his disposal ample material for describing the conditions of life at Sidcot—the social atmosphere, the costume, the dietary, the leisure pursuits—during the greater part of the School's existence, details referring to the state of Education have been much harder to obtain. To those who may think that these chapters are overweighted with details about social conditions, and with comparatively trivial records of schoolboy days, the writer would reply not only that he has made use of only a part of the reminiscences that were supplied to him, but that he has been able to obtain but scanty information relative to the attainments of the scholars during the various periods which he has attempted to describe. The School records throw but little light on this most important question; nor are the reminiscences of old scholars much more helpful. It has been found very difficult to form clear ideas of the standard of learning reached or even expected during the earlier half of the century under consideration. Even at a much later period it was apparently not the custom to preserve the reports of outside examiners, which alone would have furnished really satisfactory evidence.

A brief account of Friends' schools and schoolmasters in Bristol, in early days, seems necessary by way of introduction to the History of Sidcot School, since there can be little doubt that it was the keen and practical interest taken in Education by Bristol Friends which led to that movement in the Western Quarterly Meetings which resulted in the establishment by William Jenkins of a school for boys at Sidcot, two hundred and nine years ago.

From almost the earliest days of its existence the Society

of Friends has been honourably distinguished for the warm interest it has displayed in Education, and for the care which it has bestowed upon the right training of its younger members. George Fox himself not only laid great stress upon the subject, but was at least partly instrumental in the establishment of more than one school. In 1667 he made an entry in his Journal to the effect that, when returning to London by way of Waltham, he

“advised the setting up of a school there for teaching boys; and also a women’s school to be opened at Shacklewell for instructing girls and young maidens in whatsoever things were civil and useful in the creation,”—a comprehensive scheme of female education which we, two hundred and forty years later, must seek to emulate in vain.

Nor was the advice of the founder of Quakerism confined merely to general principles. In the collection of Swarthmoor manuscripts recently acquired by the Society, and now in Devonshire House Library, is a sheet in George Fox’s own handwriting, endorsed “G. ff.’s directions to Schoolmasters of Children.” Part of the document is missing, but the remaining portion, quoted in the “Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society,” for January 1908, shows that the writer of these “Directions” had expended no little thought on the details of a schoolmaster’s many-sided duties:—

“& if any mare (mar) ther bookes & blot ther bookes throw carlesnes, lat them sit with ovt the tobel (table) as disorderly children & if anyon torenes (turns) from these things & mendeth & doeeth soe noe more, & then if any doe aqves (accuse) them of ther former action after the be amendd, the same penelaty shall be layd vp on them as vp on them that is mended from his former doinges; & if any be knon to seale (steal?), leat him right with ovt the tabel & say his lesen & show his copy with ovt the bare (bar?), & all must be meeke, sober & ientell (gentle) & qviet and loving & not give one another bad word noe time, in the skovell (school), nor ovt of it leats (lest?) that the be mad

to say thr lesen or shew ther copy book to the master at the bare, & all is to mind ther lesones & be digelent in ther rightings.

“ & to lay vp ther bookes when the goe from the skovell & ther pens & inkonerns (ink-horns), & to keep them soe, eles the mvst be look'd vpon as carles & slovenes, & soe yov mvst keep all things clean, suet, and neat and hanson.”

Friends of the West of England early showed a practical interest in Education by the establishment of schools. Minutes of Bristol Quarterly Meeting show that, as far back as the days of Charles II., strenuous efforts were made to induce schoolmasters to settle in that city. In 1669, for example, negotiations were in progress with one John Toppin, who was offered ten pounds a year for teaching poor children, and who was to be “ allowed to teach in this roome ; provided that he be carefull to have it made cleane, ready for meetings every week.” Later entries show that John Toppin had not got to work by January 1671, and it is even doubtful if he ever opened a school in Bristol at all. Another man, however, certainly did. The Monthly Meeting of 27th February 1674 made this significant entry in its minute-book, significant, that is to say, of the attitude of Friends of the time towards Education :—

“ It being proposed to this meeting to spare the Voyd Roome over our meeting house to Lawrence Steele for a schoole roome, this meeting doth with one accord give their concent that he shall have it to the use proposed.”

Lawrence Steele, like so many other early Friends, fell under the ban of clerical persecutors. His health, already infirm, was further impaired by close confinement in Newgate Prison, Bristol ; and he died at the comparatively early age of forty, soon after his release in 1684, a martyr to his belief that oaths were contrary to the spirit of the Christian religion. By his will, which he made while still in gaol, he left a hundred and twenty pounds to Friends in Bristol, half the interest of which sum was for the poor of the city, and

half for Friends in prison. "And if none were in prison, then all for the poor."

Lawrence Steele is described by one who knew him as "a Man of a grave, solid, serious Deportment; of a sweet and even Temper and Disposition; of a sedate and retired Life; and very exemplary in his conversation; a Preacher of Righteousness in that great City, in which he walked as a Stranger and Pilgrim on Earth."

He was succeeded, a few years later, by Patrick Logan, an Irishman, "a good scholler & an apt schoolmaster to Instruct youth in Latten, etc.," whom Friends were anxious to "Incorage," although they seem to have been somewhat slow in finding scholars for him. In a letter addressed to Friends in Bristol, and dated 1690, he says:

"As it is ye duty of all men as well in ye particular as in ye generall not only to look & consider how they may get over ye straits & difficulties of this life in ye most quiet way & manner they can imagine or think upon, So also is it ye duty of all to provide for & discharge their duties to their families which God has been pleased to committ unto their charge & trust; And as most men have a naturall propensity or an inclination to this duty, So, I thank ye Lord, have I. But all means & helps being taken out of my hand for allmost these two years ever since King William came to England & since ye wars did break forth in Ireland I and my family have been at a great loss, not haveing gained a sixpence to my self & them being 8 in number during that time. Being put to this strait, Friends, It was upon me to desire you being my only refuge at present to assist in so far as you can to gather a school whereby I may both help my self & family who stand much in need at present of assistance, And I do ingage my self to you to be faithfull in my employment, & to give as much satisfaction as lyeth in my power to do."

He might, he adds, have found employment in London, or York, or Nottingham, "but it was thought fittest I should



come to Bristoll, both because friends were then earnestly seeking for a schoolmaster for educating of friends children, of which I perceive there was great need, & also because I then wanted a place. But without your help, friends, & assistance I being a great stranger & a man of an other nation, can do but little for myself, wherefore I entreat your care of me, all ye friends that have put any children to me at present are but 12. . . . I could write much to you, Friends of this matter & more than I am willing, but because I hop you will have a feeling of ye thing in your selves I rest your friend in ye blessed unspoted truth.

“PATRICK LOGAN.”

Four years later the Bristol school was in the hands of James Logan, apparently the son of the writer of the foregoing, a man who had been educated for the Church, and was a Master of Arts of Edinburgh University, but had relinquished his profession and joined the Society of Friends. In 1699 he accompanied William Penn to Philadelphia, and he eventually became Chief Justice of Pennsylvania. It is remarkable that Alexander Arscott, who followed James Logan, and who was head of the Bristol school for many years, had also had a University education, and had also been intended for the Church before he became a Friend. William Tanner, in his Lectures on Early Friends in Bristol and Somersetshire, speaks of him in the highest terms, both as a schoolmaster and a preacher of the gospel.

In 1695 the Yearly Meeting of the Western Counties—which included the Quarterly Meetings of Bristol, Worcester, Gloucester, Dorset, Wiltshire, Hereford, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall—perhaps having in view the able teaching of the Logans, and with the idea that what had been done to such advantage in Bristol should be attempted elsewhere, issued an Epistle in which occurs this striking passage :

“This Meeting doe desire yt where freinds can, they would get such Schools and Schoolmasters for their children,

as may bring them up (in) ye feare of ye Lord, and Love of his truth, yt so they may not only Learne to be Scholars, but Christians also, and yt all parents will take ye same care at home yt such Reproof Instruction Counsell and Example may be constantly continued in their respective familys, yt so from ye oldest to ye youngest truth may flow it selfe in its beauty and Comlynness to Gods Glory and all his peoples Comfort."

Minutes of a similar Meeting, held in Bristol in 1696, show that interest in Education was growing, and was taking more definite shape:

"Daniell Taylor for the county of Dorset desires that this meeting would recommend some schoolmasters for educating their youth in Reading, English, writing and Arithmetick."

"Thomas Bevan on the behalf of the friends of Wiltshire desires the assistance of this meeting to help them to a Schoolmaster for Latin, writing and Arithmetick. It is recommended to the severall countys by this meeting that (they) would take care to find out some poor lads amongst friends that might be capable (of) being put to some able schoolmaster in a few years to instruct their youth."

The simple scheme of Education laid before the Meeting by the representatives of Dorset and Wiltshire is somewhat amplified in the Epistle that followed, which, evidently alluding to the debate on the question, says:

"Friends were further carefull to recommend ye instruction and improvment of youth, in usefull Learning, as reading, writing, arithmetick, with other profitable parts of Knowlidg And such tongues as may be beneficial & not for ostentation, & to ye end yt there may be a suitable supply of Schole-masters, for ye future, it is ye advise of this General meeting, yt such poor children as fall to friends charity & care to educate yt are ingenius, and well inclined to love truth & friends may be so educated, in order to answer that service as a Schole master."

Among the somewhat numerous signatures to the Epistle

from which this passage is taken is that of William Penn, who was then on a visit to Bristol, where, in the previous year, he had married, as his second wife, Hannah Callowhill, and where he resided for a short time after 1697. It will be remembered that his father, Admiral Penn, was buried in the church of St Mary Redcliffe, where his armour still hangs, together with the mouldering remains of banners which he captured from the Dutch. William Penn's ideas on Education seem to us curiously modern, and were most enlightened for his time, as may be seen by his "Maxims" and his "Address to Protestants"; and his warm interest in the subject is further shown by the appointment, in May 1697, of himself and other Friends, "to visit or Latten Schools (Grammar Schools, that is), and Give them Counsell & advice as they shall see meet"; and again in June of the same year "to visit the Schooles of or friends children, to enquire into the order and manners thereof (and) admonish against that they shall find amiss."

A practical result of the earnest advice contained in the Yearly Meeting Epistles of 1695 and 1696 followed in 1698, when, at two consecutive Quarterly Meetings held at Glastonbury, the project of "setting up a school" somewhere in the County of Somerset was discussed; Glastonbury and Long Sutton being named, in turn, as possible sites for such an Institution. At the second meeting two Friends were appointed to "provide a schoolmaster and let him know for encouragemt that if there do not schollars enough come to him to make up twenty pounds per annum, the friends of this County will make up so much as doth fall short, for 2 years, so that he may be sure of £20 per annum for two years." At the October Meeting Friends decided that the new school should be established at "Sidcott," as being more likely to "agree with their childrens health" than either Long Sutton or Glastonbury. Nor was the healthiness of the site its only recommendation. A Friends' Meeting had been established there in or before the year 1690. There were Friends not

only in Sidcot, but at Axbridge, Banwell and Rowberrow and Friends' houses at Axbridge, Winscombe, and Wrington had been licensed as places for the holding of Meetings, the first-named in 1689. The little hamlet itself appears to have no history. The earliest allusions to it that have been found are contained in two brief entries in the Church-wardens' Accounts of the neighbouring Parish of Banwell, of the time of Henry VIII:—

“1532 Pd. Robartt Blandon for carreg of a loode of  
Stoneys from Sytkott. . . . O. I. O.  
Pd. for drynk when they com home wt. ye  
stoneys. . . . O. O. I.”

At the next Quarterly Meeting, held at Taunton, in January 1699, it was reported that a schoolmaster had offered himself. His services, however, were not accepted. In the words of the Minute, “Friends on enquiry doe thinck fitt to wave makeing use of him.” The next entry refers to a man who was destined to become a familiar figure at Sidcot for nearly thirty years:—

“Wm. Jenkins, of Hertford, psuant to an invitation from friends of this County, offering himself to this meeting for a schoolmaster, and he beeing approoved of us, and fitt for that Employmt, have agreed with him for two years, to comence from the 1st of 6th month next, viz. :

“for teaching Greek, Latin, Writing and Arithmitick, after the rate of thirty shillings per anm.

“for teaching Reading, Writeing and Arithmatick after the rate of twenty shillings per anm.

“to reside at Sithcott, a very healthy serene air, abt twelve miles from Bristol in the road to Exon.

“Friends of this County to assure him as many schollars as will amount to thirty pounds per anm. for teaching : that nine pounds per anm. is proposed for boarding such schollars as shall board.”

The new School was accordingly opened in the summer



of 1699, as appears from a Minute of the Quarterly Meeting held at Glastonbury, on the 28th of July of that year:—

“Whereas accott of Wm Jenkins, Schoolmaster, his being settled at Sithcott & friends desire accott may be given thereof to the friends of the County of his settlement that any friend that incline to send their children may as soon as they please do the same”;—a piece of English which suggests that the educational system of the County was still in its infancy.

In April 1700 Friends were informed that “whereas by order of the Quarterly Meeting a Schoolhouse<sup>1</sup> is erected at Sithcott, wh hath contracted a charge of £13. 7,” William Jenkins had been asked to produce “an accott of all, to the next Q.M., that Friends may take care for payment of what may be due.” The account, amounting to £29. 12s. 2¼, was duly presented, and the five divisions of the County subscribed £25, 5. 3., leaving “yett £7, 6. 1¼ for clearing the debt.” A later Minute shows how the deficiency was partly made up:—

“Whereas each Monthly Meeting contributed 20s each, all £5, for assisting Richard Jones to transport himself and family to Penn-Silvania if he went, and whereas he doe not goe, the money is returned . . . and it being proposed that these £5 be put to the use of the County Schools, each Monthly Meeting is to consider, and return an accott to the next Q.M.”

The Monthly Meetings agreed to this application of the money collected for Richard Jones, “and accordingly tis pd. to Wm. Jenkins.”

A year later, at the Quarterly Meeting held at Somerton, in July 1701, “Wm. Jenkins brought his account of what he hath received for his keeping schoole the second yeare, & it doth amount to 17s 3d short of what friends stand engaged. And John Hopkins deposited the money to him

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, a school-room, which was built at the back of the already existing dwelling-house, with its end close to the road, and nearly opposite to the present Meeting-house.



out of the South Monthly Meeting Stock." At the corresponding Quarterly Meeting of 1702, William Jenkins's account of "Disbursements about the Schoole house at Sydcot" came to £5. 3s., "wh friends doe order to be paid, fforty shillings by the north monthly meeting and the other £3. 3 by the other 3 monthly meetings, wh. is don accordingly." William Jenkins did not appeal to the Meeting for help again, and there is reason to believe that, after this time, the success of his venture was assured.

An interesting record of the year 1701 shows that, although this first Sidcot school was not primarily intended for the children of poor Friends, such children were by no means lost sight of:—"Wm. Jenkins proposed to this Meeting to board such children for nothing as shall be sent to him by the Monthly Meeting Charity, they paying for their tabling and the like for any Friend in case of inability to give the rates agreed on by Friends, for one yeare next ensuing, if he continue teaching school." How many children were thus sent is not known, but one such case is recorded in a Minute of a Monthly Meeting held at Weston in 1719, a time when the School was large and prosperous:—"Agreed at this Meeting to place Mary Pitstow's son to Wm. Jenkins for six months to be taught reading, Writeing and Arithmatick, and hee is to be paid by this meeting four pounds for his tabling, hee giving him his Schooling."

William Jenkins did "continue teaching school" at Sidcot until the close of the year 1728, when he sold the premises, retiring to Bristol, where he died in 1735. He was a successful schoolmaster. John Benwell, who, at a later period, taught boys in the same building, spoke highly of his predecessor's establishment; and we get an interesting glimpse of it in the Journal of Thomas Story, under the year 1718:—

"On the 18th (of September) I was at an appointed meeting at Sidcot, where we sat a long Time before the Lord was pleased to open himself; but he condescended at

last, and his Reward came with him; for we had an open time: and William Jenkins, a Schoolmaster and Friend there, bringing with him all his Scholars, (many of them Gentlemens Sons about the Country) I had something to them in particular; which being ended, I dined with William Jenkins, and that evening returned with Arthur Thomas to Cleve."

It will be seen that Thomas Story spells Sidcot as we spell it now. But in the Minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings, under 1716, is a note that William Jenkins, of "Sedcott," had, at the request of his Monthly Meeting, written up to know whether a man might or might not marry his deceased wife's sister; an interesting passage, not only because of the variation of the name, but because it shows that what William Jenkins wrote about was a vexed question in those days, as it has been in our own.

The "Gentlemens Sons about the Country" were not all members of the Society. In 1708 Bristol Quarterly Meeting reported, in reply to a query on the subject from the Yearly Meeting: "Our godly care is continued in the good education of Friends' children, insomuch that many people who are of different persuasions, send their children to table at a Friends' school, and allow them to go to meetings constantly."

The following letter, of which the original, together with some specimens of penmanship by the same hand, is preserved at the School, having been presented to the Sidcot Old Scholars' Association by the late Robert Eaton James, a descendant of the writer, gives an idea of the attainments of a boy who had been five years under William Jenkins' tuition:—

"SIDCOTT. *ye* 21<sup>st</sup> of *ye* 6<sup>th</sup> mo. 1714

"DEAR GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER,

"I present mine and my Brothers humble duty to you, and Parents my kind love to my Brother and Sisters, Uncles and Aunts, Cousins, Relations and Friends, I write these few Lines to let you know that I and my Brother, Mr. & Mrs.

& al ye Family are in good health, hoping you & all ye Family are partakers of the Like Mercy, Letting you know J have learned in Grammar, Latine Testament, Corderius, Castalion, Textor & Tully, and am got through Arithmetick, except one Rule, & also have learn'd Merchts. Accots. In learning of wch. these 5 Years no doubt but J have cost my Dr. Father a pretty deal of Money, But hope to be so diligent to Imploy my Learning & Dutiful, that my Father may never repent ye Charge bestowed upon me, J have now near finished my Learning intended & expect my ffather here to fetch me home ye Beginning of the Next Month, J remain wth. my Mr. and Mrs. their kind Love to you your

“Dutiful Son

“ROBERT SCANTLEBURY.

“My Mr. & Mrs. desire yre Dr. Love to  
Thomas Quin &c.”

Although financial difficulties seem to have disappeared at an early stage of its existence, the School had trouble of another kind. It was, indeed, hardly established when William Jenkins was prosecuted by the Bishop of Bath and Wells—the same Bishop Kidder, who, with his wife, was killed by the falling of one of the palace chimneys during the great storm of November 1703—for keeping a school without a licence; and the Minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings, between 1700 and 1705, contain many allusions to his case. In the first instance, in 1700, a verdict was given against him. But the conviction was set aside, apparently on technical grounds. And although both the Sheriff of Somerset and two successive Bishops made repeated attempts, at the Assizes at Wells, at the Bishop's visitation at Axbridge, and in other ways, to obtain a conviction, the proceedings seem to have come to nothing.

This action on the part of the authorities was only one feature of the long-continued and relentless persecution of the early Friends by the Clergy of the Established Church;

a persecution which, in this county, began with the rise of the Society and lasted for many years, and of which Friends near Sidcot had sufficiently bitter experience. In 1676, for example, William Goodridge and Samuel Sayer, both of Banwell, were imprisoned in Ilchester Gaol for refusing to pay tithes. How long they were detained is not clear. But almost immediately on their release they appear to have been arrested again, this time on a charge of refusing to take an oath in a Court of Justice. Samuel Sayer died after he had been six years in prison. William Goodridge was liberated after thirteen years' captivity; but all his property, consisting of £240 worth of goods, and real estate bringing in £60 a year, was confiscated. Timothy Willis, of Rowberrow, again, the same man who afterwards presented to Sidcot Friends a cottage to be used as a Meeting-house, was another sufferer, and had property taken from him, in 1679, for the crime of "Absence from Publick Worship."

The dungeons of Ilchester, in which hundreds of Friends were confined, both during the Commonwealth and in the reign of Charles II., some for refusing to pay tithes, some for refusing to take the oath in a Court of Justice, some for preaching the gospel, and some merely for attending Meetings of their own persuasion, and where, after years of captivity, many died, were worthy of the Inquisition itself.

The Act of James I., which required that a man should take out a licence before opening a school—an act really directed against Papists, and having nothing at all to do with Education—provided another weapon against those pestilent Quakers. A dozen Friends, in various parts of the country, were prosecuted on this charge, some of whom were fined, some imprisoned, and some even excommunicated. The earliest case that has been discovered, and one that illustrates the persistence of this kind of persecution, is that of Gilbert Thompson, of Great Sankey, near Warrington, who had "for many years Taught Schoole quietly and unmolested." In 1698, "some Persons, without any provocation from said



Thompson, being Drinking together, did agree to prosecute ye said Thompson because he Taught School without Lycense from ye Bishop." The Bishop of Chester, however, "being Favourable to him, would not listen to them; nor would the Grand Jury at Lancaster Assizes find a true bill against him." He was finally committed to Lancaster Castle, but was soon discharged under a writ of Habeas Corpus, and the prosecution appears to have been abandoned.

Thomas Dowse, again, was, through the efforts of "the Priest of the Towne," committed to Dorchester Gaol in 1699 for "haveing kept a school in Corfe Castle in the Isle of Purbeck." And in 1704 John Yeates was sent to Lancaster Castle on a similar charge. Two of these "unlicensed" schoolmasters were excommunicated, Richard Scoryer in 1699, and Edward Higginson as late as 1733. A remark made during the trial of John Owen of Welwyn, who was prosecuted in 1705, is significant, and is suggestive of views that even now, more than two centuries later, have by no means died out. The defendant had argued that the law was directed against Papists, not against Protestant Dissenters—which was the view taken by Chief-Justice Holt, in the case of Richard Claridge in 1707; when the commissary of the Court retorted that some Dissenters were as dangerous as the Popish priests; adding that "the Right of Teaching School belonged to ye Minister."

There were other troubles still. During his twenty-nine years' residence at Sidcot, William Jenkins was a prominent member of the Monthly Meeting; a Minister, and, like his brother John, who lived at Axbridge, a frequent Representative. And we learn from the records that his clearly irascible temperament—characteristic, perhaps, of a profession which is apt to exercise a wearing effect upon both nerves and patience—brought him, on several occasions, into conflict with other Friends; which was all the more awkward from the fact that, prior to 1718, the Monthly Meeting was held in his house.

Thus, in 1717, there were high words over an apparently harmless proposition to altar the mid-week Meeting from Thursday to Wednesday, a proposition which arose out of a query "How weekday meetings was kept up at Sidcott?" and the statement in reply that Friends found it difficult to attend because "Fifthday was Bristoll Markett day." William Jenkins flatly refused to agree to any change, and "friends had a great deale discourse with him in order to bring him to a sence of his Jll behaviour." Not only did he show himself "Stiff and refractory" to the general body; but, to the four Friends who were appointed to arbitrate in the matter, he "spoak many grating expressions with great warmth in a disorderly manner." The consequence was that he was "advised to keep silent as to his Publick preaching till such time hee is reconciled to that particular meeting which hee have quarrelled with at the quarterly meeting."

The Minute from which this extract is taken is dated 1718, the very year of Thomas Story's visit. Reconciliation had, however, been effected a month before. A Minute made "At our Monthly held at Weston the 6th of 8th mo., 1718," runs thus:—

"ffor as much as Certain Controversies and differences have heartofor happened between this Meeting and Wm. Jenkins, a Member of the same, and the sd. Wm. Jenkins requesting of this Meeting that all the said differences may be ended, and the matters thereof buried in Oblivion in all times to come, this Meeting accordingly Condescended to the said Proposall, and the said Controversies and differences are finally Concluded and ended, and to be mentioned no More, Provided the said Wm. Jenkins doe continue to behave himselfe a friend of Peace, and as becomes a minister of Christ.

*W.<sup>m</sup> Jenkins.*



The ink was hardly dry on this signature when the writer of it was in trouble again, having made public complaint about his brother's management of the accounts connected with the building of the new Sidcot Meeting-house. Barely was that dispute settled when the hot-tempered school-master quarrelled with his nephew; and again he did not answer "to the satisfaction of the Meeting," which, apparently, could not see that there had been anything to quarrel about.

The remaining ten years of William Jenkins's stay at Sidcot seem to have passed without further storms. The last reference to him in the books of the Monthly Meeting is in a Minute made at Bath, on the 3rd of January 1729:—

"Will. Jenkins signified that he have sold his Estate & and is Like to remove from our division requesting vs to give him a Certificate, Rich<sup>d</sup> Hipsley, Robert Spender and Abram Thomas is appointed to Inspect into this proposall & make report therof next meeting."

William Jenkins removed to Bristol, and died there in 1735.

It is stated in the trust deed of 1809 that the dwelling-house, which, for nearly thirty years, had been used as the original Sidcot School, was "partly rebuilt or greatly improved or altered" by the man who bought it in 1728, and that it changed hands several times in the course of the ensuing fifty years.

No reference to Sidcot, of any special interest, occurs in the Meeting books for some time after William Jenkins left; but there is a significant allusion to it in the "Journal" of John Griffiths, who, as one of a Committee appointed by the Yearly Meeting of 1760 to go round England and restore the discipline, which had fallen very low, visited Somerset in that year. The Committee were mostly dissatisfied with what they saw, and this County, as a whole, seems to have been no better than the rest. But John Griffiths noted that he had "a good meeting at Sedcott."

In or before 1784—the precise year is uncertain—John

Benwell, who had previously established a school at Yatton, removed to Sidcot, occupying, as his prospectuses expressly state, the premises in which William Jenkins had taught boys, so many years before. One of these prospectuses, of which two, varying very slightly from each other, are preserved at Devonshire House, runs as follows:—

“A Boarding and Day School is now opened at Sidcot, in the County of Somerset, near the Turnpike Road to Bridgewater, in the same house where a large and respectable School was many years kept by Wm. Jenkins, being a very healthy and pleasant situation.

“Where Youth are taught Reading, Writing, English Grammar, the Various Branches of Arithmetic, Merchants Accompts, and some of the useful Parts of the Mathematics; also the Latin and Greek Languages, by

“John Benwell, and a proper Assistant.

“Terms.—For Board, and teaching the Whole of the above, 16*l.* per Ann.

“Extra Washing, if two Changes of Linen a Week, 18*s.* per Ann.

“To be paid Half-Yearly. No Entrance.

“Day Scholars.—Writing and common Accompts, 6*s.* per Quarter. Ditto, with English Grammar, Bookkeeping, or the Mathematics, 10*s.* 6*d.* per Quarter. Latin and Greek, 10*s.* 6*d.* per Quarter. Ditto, with any Part of the above, 16*s.* per Quarter.

“Books, Pens, and Ink to be paid for exclusively.

“Much care will be taken to accommodate the Children in an agreeable Manner, and great Attention will be paid to their Behaviour and Morals, as well as to their Literary Improvement.

“Bristol: Printed by G. and W. Routh, Bridge Street.”

The second prospectus adds that the School is only about

two minutes' walk from the Meeting-house, and it is dated 1784.

Such records of John Benwell's school as are accessible suggest that it was, like that of William Jenkins, large and prosperous. A list has been preserved which shows that in 1805 there were forty-five boys in it, of whom three were Jonathan Dymond, author of the famous "Essays," Joseph Sturge, the great philanthropist, and Jacob P. Sturge, the distinguished land-surveyor. A letter written by the last of these, when he was thirteen years of age, speaks of his having got as far in his studies as the 20th Proposition of Euclid.



THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

## CHAPTER II

### SIDCOT A PUBLIC SCHOOL

WILLIAM JENKINS's school, although at first subsidised by the Quarterly Meeting, was undoubtedly a private undertaking. Half a century, indeed, elapsed between the closing of that establishment and the foundation of the first Friends' public school in this country. During that interval interest in Education continued to grow. Again and again was the subject discussed by the Yearly Meeting; and, especially between the years 1758 and 1762, efforts were made to establish schools in various parts of the Island, particularly for the children of poorer Friends. So little, however, appears to have been actually accomplished that, in 1777, the Yearly Meeting, feeling that there was not sufficient provision for the education of the children of those who were "not in affluent circumstances," directed the Meeting for Sufferings once more to consider the matter. The moment was opportune. The Foundling Hospital which had been erected at Ackworth, some twenty years before, had been closed, and the building was in the market. Through the untiring efforts of Dr Fothergill the property was purchased by Friends; and the result was the establishment, in 1779, of Ackworth School, then, and for nearly thirty years later, the only Friends' public school in the country.

The success of the famous Institution was instant and complete. But its very success, since it was achieved, in part, at the expense of the private schools, made things, in some respects, worse than before. Friends who could have well afforded to send their children to more expensive

establishments, sent them to Ackworth, with the result that the other schools went down. "Such are not the children," wrote George Harrison in 1802, "for whose benefit that school was professedly established; the natural consequence of which is that other schools are discouraged, and many, from that or other causes, are discontinued. The school at Kendal in Westmoreland, at Yealand in North Lancashire, at Penketh near Warrington in the same county, at Skipton in Yorkshire, at Worcester, and at Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire—all formerly of the first reputation in the Society, and abounding with scholars, have scarcely anything remaining but the walls. In short, the present state of schools in the Society, in a general view, is deplorable."

For many years after the establishment of Ackworth School, Friends appear to have thought that enough had been done for the education of the children of the poorer members of the Society. But, as time went on, it became clear that a single public school was not sufficient. Ackworth, large as it was, could not accommodate more than a tithe of the suitable candidates for admission. Moreover, it was situated, as regarded a very considerable part of the country, in a spot remote and difficult of access.

Nowhere was the question of distance more keenly felt than in the south-west of England, whence it is a far cry to Ackworth, even now, in these days of rapid travelling. It was much farther then, when, to make the journey from Falmouth, or Exeter, or even from Bristol, meant the spending of days and nights upon the road.

Five years after the publication of George Harrison's gloomy view of the state of Education in the Society, a few Friends from the West of England, who had met in London at the Yearly Meeting of 1807, discussed the question of establishing, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bristol, a new school, on the lines of Ackworth. These Friends, whose names are not recorded, were unanimous in the conclusion that such a school was greatly needed; and they



resolved to bring the matter before the next Quarterly Meeting for Bristol and Somerset.

That Meeting, which was held at Glastonbury on the 17th of the following June, "weightily considered" the proposition, and approved of the idea of founding, in one of the western counties, "an Institution somewhat similar to that at Ackworth, for the education of a smaller number of the children of Friends in low circumstances." A Committee of seventeen was appointed to take the matter under further consideration, and to report to the next meeting: and three of the number were directed to send to the Quarterly Meetings of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Hampshire, and Gloucester and Wiltshire, and to the Half-year's Meeting for the Principality of Wales, a copy of the Minute on the question, together with a statement of the reasons which had influenced the decision of the Meeting.

Although more than a century has passed since the appointment of this Committee, the names of its members sound familiar in West Country ears. They were:—

Richard Reynolds.	Samuel Capper.	Thomas Davis.
Matthew Wright.	John Benwell	Joseph Clarke.
Thomas Fox.	John Thirnbeck.	John Naish (of Bath).
George Fisher.	Richard Ball.	Joseph Naish.
Arnee Frank.	Thomas Clark.	Edward Gregory.
John Grace and James Isaac.		

Three of these Friends, John Benwell, Thomas Clark and Joseph Naish, became honorary Superintendents of the new school; Arnee Frank was for six years Clerk to the General Meeting that managed it; and George Fisher was Treasurer to the Institution for the first ten years of its existence.

The reasons, above alluded to, which had influenced the decision of the Meeting were:—Firstly, that Ackworth School was full, and was likely to remain so, since there were ninety names on the list for admission, and the fees had lately been reduced from twelve guineas to ten; and,



secondly, that Ackworth was a very long way from the western parts of England. It is clear that the second point was regarded as of almost, if not quite, as much importance as the first. Travelling in those days was, under almost any conditions, a costly undertaking. Moreover, from want of room in a coach, or from inclement weather, there was sometimes great delay on the journey, involving much extra expense and inconvenience. There is a case on record in which twenty little girls, on their way from London to Ackworth School, were detained a week at Derby, in consequence of the roads being blocked with snow. It was also felt that, in times of illness, the separation of parents from children by such great distances was another strong reason for the establishment of a new school.

The other Western Meetings which were invited to consider the question were asked, in case they "concurred in sentiment" with its proposers, to appoint a few Friends to meet those deputed by Bristol and Somerset, and any others who wished to be present, on the day before the next Quarterly Meeting. Accordingly, at Bridgwater, on the 15th of September 1807, there met, for the first time, the Provisional or General Committee, consisting of thirty-four Friends, thirteen of them appointed by the Quarterly Meeting held at Bristol in the previous June, and twenty-one of them by other Meetings of the West Country. There were also present "sundry other Friends not specially appointed."

It then appeared that all the Meetings which had been consulted approved of the plan; and the Committee definitely decided to establish, with the sanction of the Yearly Meeting, a school within easy reach of Bristol, for the education of seventy children, boys and girls, and to recommend to the various meetings interested, "a liberal subscription." At a later sitting the sum of £7000 was specified.

At the next meeting of the Committee, held at Bristol on the 15th of December 1807, the project took more definite shape. Subscriptions amounting to nearly £4000, of which

about half came from the Quarterly Meeting of Bristol and Somerset, having been received or promised, and the Committee having settled on Sidcot as the site of the new Institution, it was agreed to buy from John Benwell, for the sum of £1500, his estate there, consisting of about fourteen acres of land, with a house in which he himself had carried on a school since 1784. This house, which will be described in greater detail in the following chapter, stood very nearly on the site of the boys' wing of the existing School, facing south, and with its eastern end close to the road. The Provisional Committee also gratefully accepted the offer of John and Martha Benwell to act for a time as Superintendents, "without any gratuity other than board and residence." A draft of Rules and Regulations for the establishment, support and management of the new Institution was then considered, and was referred for further discussion to the first General Meeting, which was fixed for the following year.

It will be well, at the outset, specially to mention two very important and closely related points in these regulations; in other words, in the original constitution of the School. It was laid down by the founders that Sidcot School was to be "established and supported by donations, annuities and annual subscriptions (in addition to the price of the bills of admission), by Friends of the Quarterly Meetings of Bristol and Somerset, Cornwall, Devon, Gloucester and Wiltshire, and of the Monthly Meetings of South Wales; also by those of any other Monthly or Quarterly Meetings which may hereafter join them, with the consent of the General Meeting hereinafter mentioned, and of the Yearly Meeting in London; open nevertheless to the benevolent inclinations of Friends in individual capacity in any other parts of the nation."

It is clear that it was not expected that the new School would pay its own expenses. It was to be carried on at a loss for the benefit of poor Friends. As there was no endowment, the founders could only look to outside help to



J. B. B. B.



make up this loss. In the lapse of years sums of money have, from time to time, been invested on behalf of the Institution, and the School estates now yield an income of about £800 a year. But at first there was practically no endowment whatever. The property at Sidcot was bought, the house was prepared, officers were appointed, and scholars presented themselves. That is to say, the machine was set going. But its founders, although they knew that it would have to be worked at a loss, were unable to collect sufficient funds to keep it going. It was rather like building a water-mill without arranging for adequate water-power, or erecting a steam-engine without providing a sufficiency of fuel. Under these circumstances the founders ruled that the necessary funds should be provided by Friends of the Associated Meetings, in the forms of donations and annual subscriptions, which they hoped would cover the inevitable deficit. It will be interesting to consider how far this hope has been justified. Beginning with the Annual Report of 1810, the first year in which annual subscriptions are separately mentioned, the following contributions towards the support of Sidcot School were reported to the General Meeting, at intervals of ten years :—

Annual Subscriptions.	Donations.	Legacies.
1810. £416 19 0	£263 16 0	£45 0 0
1820. 310 7 0	61 0 0	190 0 0
1830. 309 6 6	19 0 0	400 0 0
1840. 330 16 6	...	644 2 0
1850. 266 18 6	118 0 0	50 0 0
1860. 176 17 0	18 12 0	110 0 0
1870. 164 3 0	10 5 0	90 0 0
1880. 123 7 9	...	...
1890. 72 5 6	...	...
1900. 71 3 4	...	...

The high-water mark of annual subscriptions was reached in 1812, when the amount was £512, 6s. 6d., whilst the lowest

level occurred in 1897, when the sum was only £49, 9s. 6d. In 1811 the donations amounted to £1274, 12s., including an anonymous benefaction of a thousand guineas.

Another method of raising money was by means of annuities. Under this scheme Friends gave money to the School, on condition of receiving an annual payment during life, and in some cases the annuity was to be continued during the life of a relative. For example, in 1827 Dr Robert Pope, of Staines, presented to the Institution the sum of £2000, on condition that an annuity of £100 a year should be paid during the lives of himself, his wife and his daughter. The payments in this instance continued for forty years, Dr Pope's daughter receiving the last instalment in 1867. No annuities have, since that time, been granted by the Institution.

The second point to be noticed, in the original constitution, is the class of children for whose benefit the School was founded. It was resolved by the Provisional Committee that agents should be appointed by the various Associated Meetings, and that these agents should recommend for admission "Children who are members of the respective meetings by which such agents are appointed, and who are either the offspring of poor Friends, or of those who cannot well afford to send them to other boarding schools. They are not to encourage the sending of those whose parents or guardians can conveniently send them to other boarding-schools." Poor children who were not members of the Society might also, if one parent was a member, be recommended for admission. "And in case of application for the admission of ANY CHILD very particularly circumstanced, but not coming within the above descriptions, the agent, with two Overseers, as aforementioned, may forward such application, together with a clear explanation of the case, to the Superintendent, to be laid before the Committee, who, after due investigation, may lay it before the General Meeting for its determination."



It is clear that these two clauses, the one referring to revenue and the one defining the class of children who were to be admitted, were intended by the founders of the School to work together. The School was not meant to be self-supporting. Without endowment it was impossible that it should be self-supporting, and a loss on every scholar was contemplated from the commencement. But it was expected that this loss would be made good by annual subscriptions.

If the scholars were to be clothed and fed and taught for less than they cost the Institution, the deficiency must be made up somehow, or the School could not be continued. This deficiency loomed large in the very earliest Annual Reports. Year after year the income fell short of the expenditure. Year after year Friends were appealed to for "a liberal subscription." As early as 1812 this passage occurs in the General Meeting Report:—"This Meeting, strongly impressed with the necessity of an INCREASED ANNUAL INCOME, earnestly recommends Liberality in the Subscriptions of Friends, in the respective Meetings concerned in the Institution."

The appeal fell on unheeding ears. The amount of the annual subscriptions stated in that very report, and, therefore, received before the foregoing clause was written, was the highest ever received by the School, and has never again been even equalled. It may be mentioned that, so early as 1810, when the School had been established only two years, the Committee, already feeling the pinch of a too slender income, proposed that when there were more than two vacancies, any Friends, of the Associated Meetings, who were willing to pay the actual cost, might be allowed to send their children to Sidcot. The proposition was thrown out by the following General Meeting. But it was possibly due to this suggestion on the part of those who had to try and make ends meet that the annual subscriptions for the year following amounted to more than five hundred pounds.

After that came an almost unbroken fall in the outside support of the Institution: so long ago did Friends expect that bricks should be made without straw; in other words, that the Committee should feed and clothe and educate children at a loss, while the Meetings which had acquiesced in the rule that the Institution should be supported by "donations, annuities and annual subscriptions (in addition to the price of the bills of admission)," failed to fulfil their own unmistakable part of the contract.

It has sometimes been said that the cost of Education at Sidcot School has been so raised as to place it beyond the reach of those for whom the establishment was originally intended. But the fault is not in the School. No one can suppose that the education which seemed sufficient a century ago, when men and women entered lightly on the difficult and delicate work of teaching, without training, and with no proof of qualification, would satisfy the requirements of the present day, when the preparation for what may now be truthfully styled the scholastic profession involves a heavy expenditure of time and money. As has been shown, the decline in the subscriptions began within a few years of the foundation of the School. Whatever were the reasons which induced the Friends of a century ago to withdraw their support, it could not have been urged then that the education of the scholars was too advanced, or that the salaries of the teachers were unnecessarily high. Those were the days when French, as a subject of instruction, was quite unknown; while Latin might only be taught by the Superintendent, "if qualified." The only mathematical subject mentioned in the early records is Arithmetic; and when, in the year 1815, it was decided, after months of discussion, to buy single copies of a few works on more advanced subjects, the Clerk to the Committee knew so little of their contents that he has left on record the names of two as "Blairs Grammer of Natural and experimental Philocofy," and "Bonnycastle's Trygonomerity." In the same year the

salaries of officers amounted to the not very extravagant total of £124, 7s. 1d.

The Western Meetings, as a whole, had favoured the proposed undertaking. But the Quarterly Meeting of Dorset and Hampshire, held at Salisbury, 3rd December 1807, "decided to propose to the Q.M.'s of Bristol and Somerset, Gloucester and Wilts, Devonshire, Cornwall, and the half-yearly meeting of Wales," that the new school should be not for seventy, but for a hundred "children all over the country, not limited to the western counties, and that it shall be a Yearly Meeting school like Ackworth"; that is to say, that it should be under the control, not of West of England Friends only, but of the Society in general. The suggestion did not commend itself to the Provisional Committee, and at the next sitting the Dorset Meeting withdrew from the scheme. It was also at that sitting that the Committee agreed "that the Monthly Meetings of Shropshire and North Wales should (from local considerations) be left to continue their present connection with Ackworth School."

Perhaps another reason for the withdrawal of Dorset and Hampshire Friends may be found in the fact that they were evidently not very confident about the future of Quakerism in the West of England. After stating the views of the Quarterly Meeting with regard to the proposed new school, the Minute goes on:

"Although there may be a sufficient number of well qualified Friends within the compass of the said five Quarterly Meetings and the Half-yearly Meeting in Wales who may be disposed to devote all the necessary time and attention to the conducting such an Institution, yet such are the changes in human affairs, that it would perhaps be scarcely safe to depend on that continuing to be the case through succeeding generations."

The Provisional Committee, and all Friends whose names are given as having attended the first four deliberative

gatherings on the question of founding the new school, were men; but at the session held in Bristol, on the 27th of April 1808, it was decided that any of the Associated Meetings should be at liberty to appoint women Friends to attend the monthly Committee at the School.

The Yearly Meeting of 1808, having considered the proposition from Bristol and Somerset, agreed to the establishment, "in one of the Western Counties," of a school for the education of the children of poor Friends and of those who could not well afford to send them elsewhere, on the understanding that the new institution should be so far under the control of the Yearly Meeting "as to be subject to its interference should it see occasion," and that an Annual Report on the state of the School should be submitted to the Meeting. The Yearly Meeting also ruled that Friends of the Associated Meetings should be exempted from contributing to the support of Ackworth School; but added that, if Friends inclined to contribute, or if any of the Associated Meetings wished to send representatives to the Ackworth General Meeting, their contributions would be gladly accepted and their representatives be received with a cordial welcome. The Provisional Committee held its last sitting at Glastonbury on the 15th of June 1808, when the purchase of John Benwell's property was concluded, and a General Meeting of the new School appointed to be held at Sidcot on the 15th of the following July.

The first General Meeting for Sidcot School accordingly assembled in the old Meeting-house,—built in 1718, and still, although now converted into a dwelling-house, standing at the bottom of the Long Garden,—which was used by Sidcot Friends until the autumn of 1817. Twenty-eight representatives were present; thirteen of them from Bristol and Somerset, two from Devonshire, and thirteen from Gloucester and Wiltshire. Cornwall and South Wales were not represented. Arnee Frank having been appointed Clerk to



the General Meeting, the draft of Rules and Regulations, which had been prepared by the Provisional Committee, was considered, and, with some slight alterations, agreed to.

These Regulations, which represent the original constitution of the School, decided that the new Institution should be established and supported by the voluntary contributions of Friends, in addition to the fees paid by scholars. They defined the functions of the General Meeting, of the Committee and of the Agents; the duties of the Superintendent and the Mistress, and of the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. They ruled that children were not, unless under particular circumstances, to be admitted below the age of nine, and they were to leave school at fourteen. Girls, in special cases, might stay until they were fifteen. The rate of payment was fixed, "for the present," at £14 a year, to which was to be added 4s. 4d. for pocket money. This last item suggests a penny a week, all the year round, without a break; but a holiday of four weeks, in the summer, was agreed on from the opening of the School. The rules also contain lists of the clothing which scholars were expected to bring with them; lists whose brevity hints at a state of Spartan hardihood. The boys of 1808 were thought sufficiently equipped with

2 Hats, 2 Coats.	3 Shirts.
2 Waistcoats, not washing ones.	2 Pair Shoes.
2 Pair Breeches.	3 Pocket Handkerchiefs.
	3 Pair Stockings.

The scholars of that elder day were clearly not supposed to require collars or neckties, night-shirts or overcoats. It is interesting to trace the growth, not of luxury, but of civilization, in the changes in these clothing lists. The General Meeting of 1824 added a great-coat and three night-caps to the boys' outfit, and altered the third item in the original list to "2 Pairs Breeches or Trowsers." In 1837 trousers were definitely substituted for breeches, and the

boys were to have night-shirts. In 1851 caps were allowed, and collars and slippers were added. No neckties yet. In the year of the first Great Exhibition Sidcot schoolboys had plain Quaker "straight collars" to their coats; and neckties would not be wanted. As late as 1854 the girls' bonnets were to be "without trimmings"; and at that time "1 Pair Pattens or Clogs" still formed a necessary part of feminine equipment.

Under the original constitution the boys were to be taught "Reading, Writing, English Grammar, Arithmetic and Geography, with any other branches of learning which the General Meeting may think proper and direct. In case of any parents having particular reasons for wishing their sons to learn Latin, or if any boys discover a genius that way, the Master (if qualified) may, with consent of the Committee, instruct them therein, on such terms as may hereafter be agreed upon. And in order to obtain the benefits resulting from early employment (allowing proper time for recreation), they are to sweep and dust their own dining-room, school-room and lodging-rooms, light their own fires, make their beds, clean their shoes and knives and forks, wait at table, assist in getting their own breakfasts and suppers, repair their stockings, and the senior boys to be employed on the land, or in the garden when they can be useful therein, and in any other employment which the Committee may think proper." One of these "employments" was soon discontinued. After 1810 the boys were no longer expected to mend their own stockings, because the work was found, to use the not wholly lucid language of the Minute, "somewhat to interfere with their more important duties, and not likely to be to them of much if any utility."

The girls of 1808 were "to be taught Reading, Writing, English Grammar, Arithmetic and Geography, Sewing and Knitting; and (allowing proper time for recreation) to keep their own dining-room, school-room and lodging-rooms swept and dusted, and the senior girls assist in washing them; light



their fires, make up and keep in repair their own and the boys' linen, also linen articles for the use of the family; make their own beds, clean their shoes and knives and forks, wait at table, assist occasionally in the kitchen, and in any other domestic business which the Committee may think proper."

School-hours were to be from seven to eight, and from nine to twelve, in the morning; and from two to five in the afternoon. There was to be no school before breakfast in "the four winter months," and there was to be no work on Saturday afternoons.

The Staff of the Institution was arranged by the following Minute:—

"This Meeting apprehends the following Officers and Servants will be necessary for the present good Government of the School, viz. :—

A Man Friend as Superintendent,

A Woman Friend as Mistress,

One Schoolmaster,

One Schoolmistress,

One Cook,

One Kitchen Maid,

One Day Labourer, to work on the land and Garden, milk the Cows, and do other work which the boys may not be equal to,

Chare Women to be hired by the Mistress occasionally for washing, &c."

The next step was the appointment, as Superintendent and Mistress of the School, of John and Martha Benwell, who, as already mentioned, offered to act for a time, "without any Gratitude but their Board." There have been fifteen Superintendents and sixteen Mistresses—usually, although not invariably, husband and wife—since the Foundation in 1808. It is remarkable that there were eleven Headmasters, as we should term them now, in the first half-

century of the School's existence, and only four in the second :—

John and Martha Benwell . . . .	1808-1810
Thomas and Fanny Clark, for a few months, after April . . . .	1810
John and Margaret Crouch . . . .	1810-1812
Robert and Lydia Gregory . . . .	1812-1817
Joseph Naish, after Robert Gregory's death in 1817, and Lydia Gregory .	1817-1820
John Dafforn and Elizabeth Ellis . .	1820-1821
William and Mary Batt . . . .	1821-1835
William Batt and Jane Pitman, after Mary Batt's death in 1835 . . .	1835-1839
Benjamin G. and Ann Gilkes . . .	1839-1846
John E. and Hannah Veale . . . .	1846-1847
John and Ann Frank . . . . .	1847-1852
Martin Lidbetter and Elizabeth M. Moore . . . . .	1852-1853
Henry and Edith Dymond . . . .	1854-1864
Henry Dymond and Adelaide Leslie, after Edith Dymond's resignation in 1864 . . . . .	1864-1865
Josiah and Mary Hannah Evans . . .	1865-1873
Edmund and Eliza Ashby . . . .	1873-1902
Dr Bevan and Mabel Lean . . . .	1902

The first Treasurer to the Committee was George Fisher, who held office for ten years. He has had only six successors in ninety years, and of those six, George Thomas and John Gayner served the Institution for thirty-three and twenty years respectively, or for more than half the life-time of the School :—

George Fisher, 1808-1818.	Richard Fry, 1870-1879.
James I. Wright, 1818-1837.	John Gayner, 1879-1899.
George Thomas, 1837-1870.	John Morland, 1899-1907.
Theodore Sturge, 1907.	

The following were the first Sidcot Committee, appointed in 1808, "to take upon them the general management of the School, in conjunction with some women Friends to be appointed by the several Quarterly Meetings concerned, and by the Monthly Meetings of South Wales":

John Brewin.	Thomas Clark.	George Withy.
Arnee Frank.	Joseph Naish.	Joseph Storrs Fry.
William Gayner.	Young Sturge.	Robert Gregory.
George Fisher.	Samuel Capper.	Joseph Clark.

In 1815 the number of men on the Committee was reduced to nine. The Quarterly Meetings at first appointed six women Friends; but after 1813 both men and women were appointed by the General Meeting.

The General Meeting then agreed to the purchase of a second estate, a house and about five acres of land, immediately adjoining what had been John Benwell's school, for "about £500," with the idea of using it as a school for girls. But as possession could not be obtained until the following spring, it was resolved that "the House now occupied by John Benwell" should be opened on the 1st of September for twenty boys and fifteen girls. It was also agreed that, in addition to paying the stipulated £1500, with interest, for the new property, the Committee should "take by a proper Valuation such parts of the Furniture, Fixtures and Farming Stock, belonging to John Benwell as he may incline to part with, and as he may think proper."

John Benwell's School was originally a gentleman's residence; and, to judge from old drawings, which give a much more pleasing impression than the quaint wooden mosaic preserved in the present building, it must have been a fine, if somewhat formal-looking, edifice of three floors, facing south, nearly on the ground now occupied by the boys' wing, and with its front in line with that of the modern structure. Its eastern end was close to the road. When new premises were built, in 1837 and 1838, a space of about

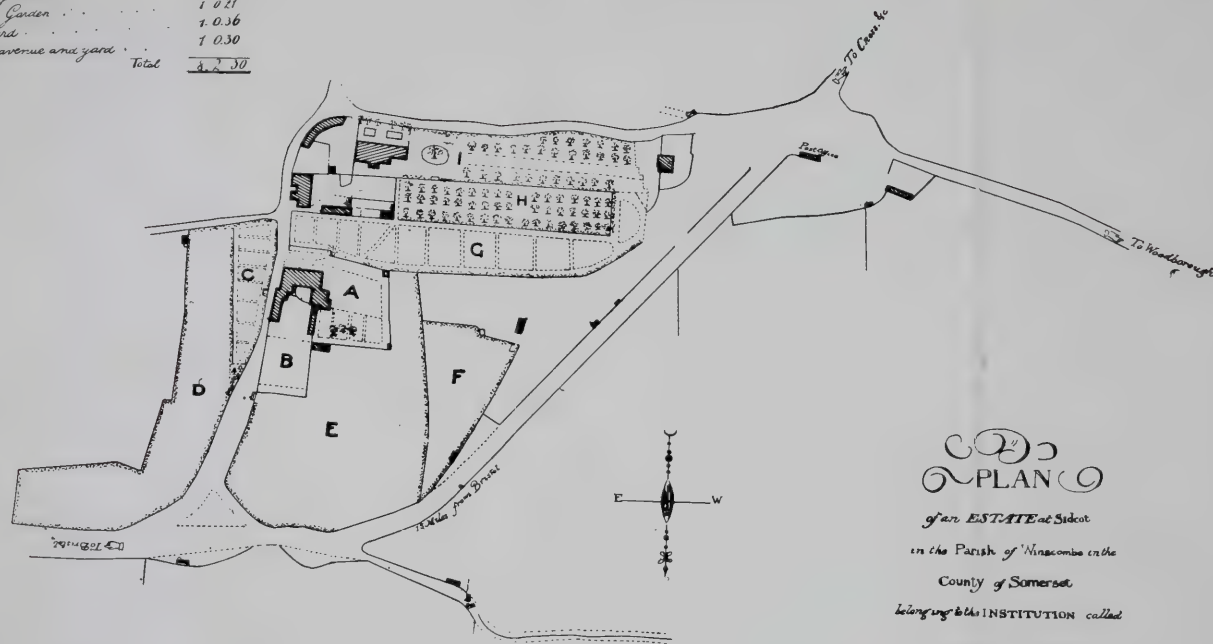
ten yards was left between the house and the lane. This space, occupied in 1861 by the boys' First Class-room and the boys' offices, is now filled up, so that the eastern end of the building of to-day exactly corresponds with that of Williams Jenkins's School of two hundred and nine years ago. The length of the front of the old house was the same as from the original end of the boys' wing, of 1838, to the present porch—that is to say, the old front was not quite half as long as the front of fifty years ago. Old drawings show a porch in the centre of John Benwell's house, but that was not built until 1818. The front door opened into a passage, with a square parlour on each side of it. The one on the left, the usual reception-room, was "an old-fashioned, wainscotted room, painted bluish-grey, with an ancient grate, the sides of which were lined with Dutch tiles, on each of which was delineated, in blue, a fisherman dragging a net ashore." Beyond this room, still further to the left, was the Committee-room, nearly twenty feet square, and with two high windows over-looking the Long Garden. The dining-room, a long apartment with two fire-places, and with a large bay-window looking out on a quadrangle at the back of the main building, stood close to the road, opposite the present Meeting-house. North of the dining-room was the school-room, at right angles to it, and, like it, with no window looking out upon the road.

Sidcot School is so fortunate as to possess an early and well-executed map of its property, designed by Robert Gregory, the Superintendent, and drawn by Thomas Tallack, one of the scholars, and dated 8th June 1815,—ten days before the battle of Waterloo. An entry in the School Cash-Book, in the following July, records that the young draughtsman, then 13½ years of age, received from the Committee "a present" of 5s. 6d. as a reward for his labours.

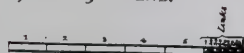
It may be seen from this plan that John Benwell's Estate included, in addition to several fields, the land occupied by the present School with its various buildings, and also the

# REFERENCE

	A	P
A House ground Dwelling house &c	0	2.20
B Play ground	0	1.8
C Kitchen garden	0	1.1
D No. 16 Field	1	1.35
E Green Hill field	1	3.74
F Orchard	0	2.20
G Lower garden	1	0.21
H Orchard	1	0.36
I House avenue and yard	1	0.30
Total		<u>8.2.50</u>



SCALE of CHAINS.



PLAN

of an ESTATE at Sidcot  
in the Parish of Wincoburn in the  
County of Somerset  
belonging to the INSTITUTION called  
SIDCOT SCHOOL.





small piece of ground between the grave-yard and the lane, part of which is now occupied by the boys' gardens, but not Rose Cottage or the Long Garden. The site of the modern centre and girls' wing was not then built upon, and is marked "pleasure-ground," and was laid out partly in grass and partly in flower-beds. Among the beds stood three trees, one of which, no doubt, is the beautiful copper-beech that still shades part of the girls' playground. The playground of that day was at the back of the house, as at present; but there was no playing-shed until late in 1813 or early in 1814, and no swimming-bath until 1849. North and west of the playground were two fields, one called Green Hill Field, but known later as the "Tatie Field," where generations of Sidcot boys have dug potatoes or pulled turnips, under the eye of the School gardener; and the other called the Cherry Orchard. The former of these is now included in the boys' playground, the latter in that of the girls, except for the spaces occupied by buildings. Other School property in 1808 included the field now called Five Acres, the long piece of pasture south of it, skirting the Woodborough Lane—and variously known as Three Acres, the Middle Field, and the Pigstye—the Long Acre further to the west and an out-lying piece called Twynnard's Mead, which was sold in 1850.

The property purchased from Colonel Knollis in 1809, for the Girls' School, included a large part, although not the whole, of the Long Garden,—in which the School-house then stood,—and the present farmyard. A small thatched house, which served for some time as the Post Office, and for a longer period as a shop, and which stood rather nearer to the site of the present School than Rose Cottage now does, was not part of the Estate, and did not become School property until 1835. The Long Garden was entirely cut off from the Bristol Road by two cottages and their plots of ground, which belonged to other owners, and which, like a third cottage, demolished in 1905, in building the Head-master's

residence, were not bought by the School for many years afterwards. The farm-yard of 1809 was of the same shape and of much the same area as that of 1908; and it is possible that the wall at its south-eastern corner, where there are some blocked-up windows, may be part of a cottage which stood there until 1835.

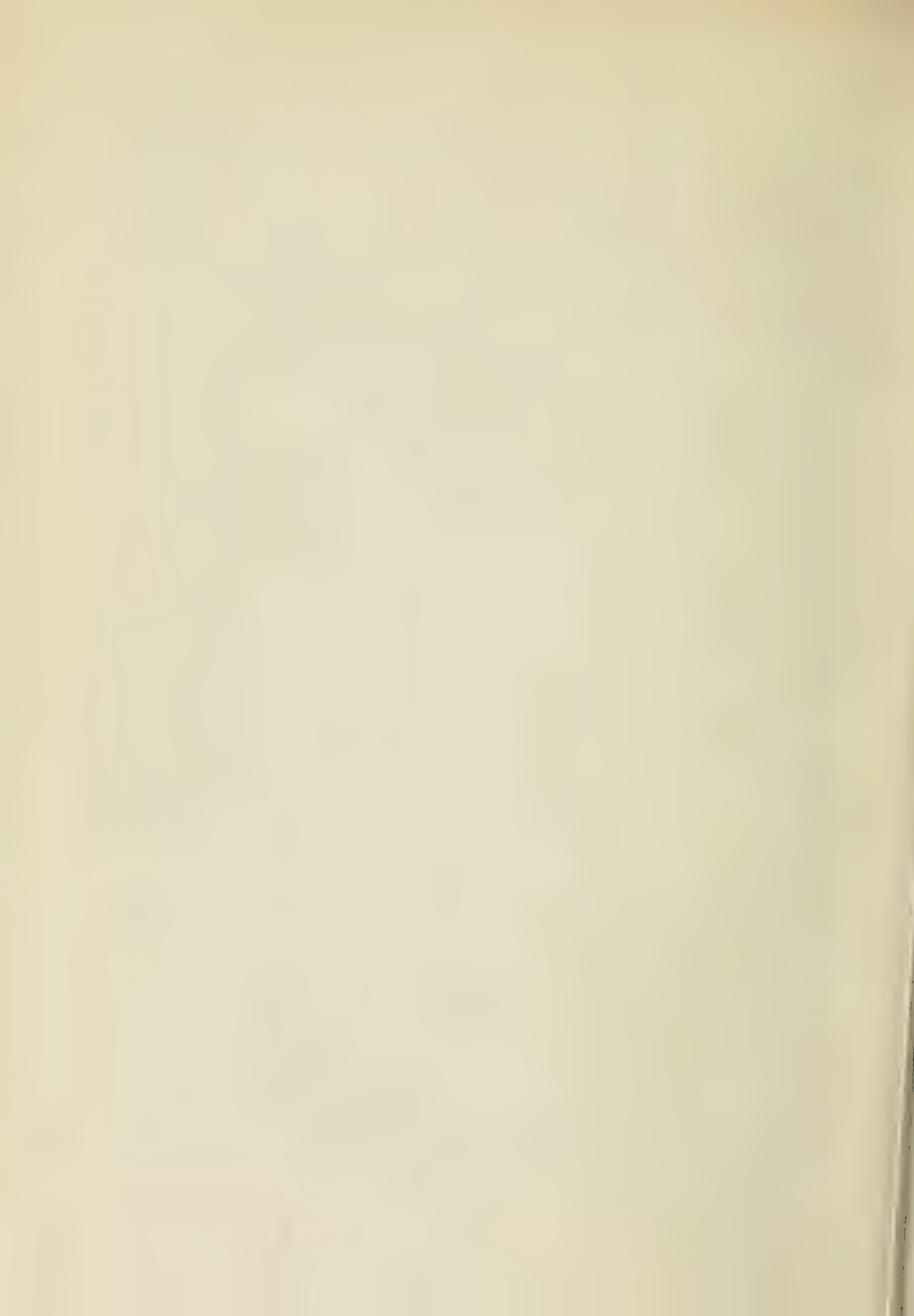
The Girls' School itself, which, like the other building, had been a gentleman's mansion, known by the quaint name of "Russels otherwise Mannory," stood twelve yards back from Fountain Lane, with its eastern end touching the wall of the farm-yard, and occupying most of the space between the yard and the old oak-tree by the "Committee Friends."

Like the Boys' House it faced the south, and its entrance was nearly opposite George Thomas's Well. Some trace of the gateway may still be seen in the boundary-wall of the Long Garden. The building consisted of two parts, like two houses placed end to end; and, although not so high, having only two floors, it was longer than the Boys' School. No vestige of it now remains. It was pulled down in 1841, together with the old thatched cottage in the lane, and the materials of both were used in the erection of Rose Cottage, the gas-works, the stables and the coach-houses. The ivy-mantled ruin in the Long Garden, recently converted into a green-house, was no part of the School itself, but is the remains of one of the out-houses.

In a line between the "Committee Friends" and the old Meeting-house at the bottom of the garden, there ran a broad walk, between two rows of lime-trees, known as the Avenue. This path, with the space under the elms, then and for many subsequent years covered with gravel, and where stood a summer-house and a garden-seat, appears to have been the only playground of the girls. The centre of the Long Garden was occupied by an extensive orchard, an enclosure more than a hundred yards long, and containing three rows of apple-trees, whose fruit was chiefly, if not solely, used for making cider. In good years the apple-crop



THE SCHOOLS OF 1808 AND 1809





yielded  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hogsheads of cider, valued in the School accounts at £5, 10s. Many other trees are marked on the plan of 1815, but the elms which have been known from time immemorial as the "Committee Friends" are not among them. They were, however, undoubtedly there. People still living in the village remember them as tall trees more than seventy years ago.

Although both the old School buildings have thus vanished to the last detail, a few relics of this early period still survive, and some of them are without doubt of more ancient date than the Foundation of the School. One of these is the tall "grandfather's" clock, now in the Head-master's study, believed to be the original clock which was bought from John Benwell in 1808. The face has been tampered with by a modern clock-mender; but inside the case is the date 1826, together with notes of repairs that were made in that year. Of the same era is the primitive old stone roller, which was long the only implement of its kind belonging to the Estate, and which will be remembered by many Sidcot cricketers. Four silver table-spoons and six silver tea-spoons, bought for the School in the first year of its existence, are also still preserved. The tall clock which stands in the Girls' Hall, and the old bureau in the Head-master's study, are probably those which were purchased for the Girls' School in 1810. The pair of large globes which now stand in the Second Form room were presented to the Institution by Thomas Richardson in 1816.

The Estate above described is the Estate of 1808 and 1809. Three important additions to the School property were, however, made within a few years of the Foundation. In 1811 the Committee bought, for £168, the North Field, on which the Meeting-house and the Sanatorium have since been built; and in the following year a piece of land was purchased, near Glastonbury, at a cost of rather more than £1300. In 1815 this estate was re-valued at £1200, and in 1823 its estimated value had sunk to £750. It

subsequently improved, however, and was sold in 1855 for £900. The third purchase was that of the Bridgwater Property, which was bought in 1817 for about £3600, and which, next to the School itself, now forms the most valuable asset of the Institution. In 1818 the return from it was about £80. But, owing to the fact that a large part of it has since been let on long building-leases, it now brings in about £600 a year, and is considered to be worth £12,000, or between three and four times its original cost.

The last business to be transacted at the first General Meeting was the admission, as a scholar, of William Hughes, whose father was then in America. This boy's name appears on the books as the First Sidcot Scholar, although there can be no doubt that Robert Simpson, who attended a General Meeting within the recollection of the writer of this History, was the first to cross the threshold of the School.

The Constitution of the School referred to in the foregoing pages was that agreed to by the General Meeting of 1808. But a document has lately been found among the School records which shows that, in the course of the following year, modifications of the highest importance were made, with regard both to the class of children it was proposed to educate and to the powers of the General Meeting.

This document, entitled a "Declaration of Trust as to Premises at Sidcot in the County of Somerset purchased for the purpose of establishing a School," and dated 10th April 1809, states that the new Institution was intended "for the Education of the Children of persons being Members of the Society of Friends (commonly called Quakers) and also of the Children of such persons who shall attend their Meetings for worship as cannot well afford to send them to other Boarding Schools."

Farther on in the Deed occurs a passage which leaves the General Meeting perfectly free and unfettered with regard to any changes which it may think desirable:—"such General Meetings being holden once or oftener in every year

and having full power and authority to revoke annual and make void the then existing rules orders and regulations relative to the said School and the General management thereof and to make or ordain others in the room place or stead thereof."

This Deed, to which are affixed the seals and signatures of fourteen influential Friends, twelve of them intimately associated with the early history of the Institution, and five of them on the Committee at the time, may be taken to represent in legal form an outline of the final embodiment of the original Constitution of the School.

## CHAPTER III

### EARLY DAYS

THE School was opened on Thursday, the 1st of September 1808. Nine children, six boys and three girls, were in the house within the month, possibly upon the Opening Day. The first to arrive was Robert Simpson, who, indeed, was there in August, and was thus without doubt the First Sidcot Scholar, although William Hughes' name was the earliest on the books. The writer well remembers seeing Robert Simpson at the General Meeting of 1867. He was not really an old man then, having been born in the last year of the eighteenth century. But ever since that day he has seemed to the writer the counterfeit presentment of the solitary figure in the pathetic verses of "The Last Leaf." It is a memory that seems to link together the whole hundred years of the School's existence.

Fourteen more children came to school before the close of the year, making a total for 1808 of 23. The total number of scholars reported to the General Meeting of 1809 was 29. The number present in September 1809—that is to say, at the end of the first complete year—was 32; when William Hughes, the first to go if he had not been the first to come, left the School. Three years later the total was 67, and in 1815 it was 75. In 1820 the number had risen to 85, 50 boys and 35 girls, when both houses were quite full. There were 85 scholars also in 1821, but that was the high-water mark. More than twenty years elapsed before that figure was again reached.

It had been decided by the preliminary General Meeting

of 1808 that the teaching-staff was to consist, in addition to the two Heads of the Establishment, of one schoolmaster and one schoolmistress. When the scholars assembled, however, no regular teachers had been found. For the first year Samuel Norris, possibly a Friend resident in the neighbourhood, "acted in the capacity of a schoolmaster," and was paid twenty guineas per annum. And in the Records of 1809, Mary Benwell, the Superintendent's daughter, is described as "the present schoolmistress." Her salary was sixteen guineas a year. The first regular teacher was John Mayne, who commenced his duties on the 1st of August 1809. He was to live in the house, and his "wages" were to be forty pounds a year. All he ever got, however, was ten pounds, for he left Sidcot on the 1st of the following November.

Elizabeth Wansbrough, who, like most officers of the time, came at first on trial, was more successful in the other house. She began her work in October 1809, and she remained at her post five years, receiving at first £25, and at a later period £30 per annum. She was assisted during 1810, and probably in some subsequent years, by members of the School Committee; but in 1811 Mary Andrews agreed to come for two years as a regular assistant. She was to be supplied with "clothes, washing, and all necessaries, and 6s. per quarter for the 1st year, 7/6 for the second year, and 10/6 for the third yr., by way of pocket-money." Small as the remuneration was, it was much the same as that received by the Sidcot apprentices of half a century later. Mary Andrews stayed her full time, leaving in 1814. In the old account-book, in the list of payments to the Staff, her name is usually the last, coming after all the servants. That, however, may have been because of the slenderness of her stipend, and may have had no connection with her status in the School.

After John Mayne left, on the 1st of November 1809, there was no teacher at all in the Boys' House until the



arrival of Charles Brewin, in January 1810. There were only about twenty boys, and these the Superintendent managed single-handed. Shortly after Charles Brewin's appointment John Benwell resigned his honorary post as Head of the Institution; and the General Meeting, in accepting his resignation, made grateful acknowledgment of his services. There can be no doubt that the commendation was well deserved. John Benwell's scholars long remembered him with gratitude and affection. The ex-Superintendent maintained friendly relations with the School authorities, and served for some years on the Committee. He withdrew for a time to Pensford, near Bristol, but soon returned to the scene of his long labours, occupying first Oakridge, and then Sidcot Farm, where he died in 1824, at the age of seventy-five. His brother Joseph Benwell kept, at Longfield, a Boys' School, afterwards carried on by Thomas Ferris, teaching his scholars in a room which is now used as a stable. Joseph Benwell's son, who entered the service of the East India Company, was an artist, and a painter of many beautiful Oriental landscapes.

When John Benwell retired, the Committee decided that it would be better, in so small a school, to combine the offices of Superintendent and Schoolmaster; and it was arranged that in future the Head of the house should do the chief part of the teaching himself. Meanwhile two Friends, Thomas and Fanny Clark, volunteered to take charge of the Institution until a properly qualified master could be engaged. The desired man was found in the following June, when the Committee appointed John and Margaret Crouch, of "Ives, Huntingdonshire," — Friends thought it right to omit the "Saint" which forms half the name—at a salary of £120 a year, with a deduction of £10 for each of their two children.

John Crouch's rule was not a long one. He entered on his duties in July 1810; and a Minute of the Committee, dated January 1812, expressed the judgment of that body that the Superintendent was "not in all respects as suitable

as is desired," a guarded phrase, which, however, gave deep offence to the recipient of it. It is pleasant to learn that harmony was soon restored. The Committee assured their officer that they had no intention of wounding his feelings, and that they would willingly have used other words to express their views. John Crouch, on the other hand, "fully and candidly" admitted the justice of the Committee's conclusions, and expressed a wish to be relieved from his post as soon as a successor could be found.

Whatever may have been the shortcomings of the retiring Superintendent, he certainly introduced more order into the financial arrangements, at least in so far as regarded the paying of the Staff. An entry in the cash-book, for Christmas Day 1810, contains a complete list of the officers and servants whose salaries were then, for the first time, punctually paid. Before that date the Head-master appears to have paid his few assistants when he had sufficient funds in hand. Mary Andrews, for example, on one occasion received three-quarters of a year's salary at once. To be sure, it amounted to no more than twenty-two shillings and sixpence, even then. It is quite possible that the Committee were dissatisfied with John Crouch because expenses were going up. Under his management the average cost of each scholar rose to close upon £29 a head;—not only the highest figure reached during the period ending 1821, but the highest before 1854.

It is interesting, in connection with the Staff, to note that the wages of a maid-servant at the School, in 1808, were £6, 10s. a year. In 1810 they were £8, and by 1817 they had risen to £10 per annum. The work was probably hard. Very few maids stayed as long as twelve months. A manservant, however, who was engaged in John Crouch's time, remained some years, and, in after days, became a familiar figure in Sidcot Meeting. This was William Higgins, who, having been a plough-boy on the estate of Joseph Clark, father of the late James Clark of Street, was recommended

to the School by that Friend as "honest and straight-forward." He appears in the cash-book of 1812 as "the man-servant," and he was paid fourteen guineas a year, a sum afterwards raised to sixteen guineas. Those were days when, if anything was wanted from Bristol, the simplest way was to go and fetch it. William Higgins was often employed in this manner as a messenger; and once, when in February 1818 he had been sent on some errand for the School, the keeper of the accounts, feeling, perhaps, a pardonable pride in the possession of what must have been then a rare accomplishment, made in faultless caligraphy this entry:—

"By Wm. Higgins going twice to Bristol à Cheval, 4s. 3d."

Some time after 1821 William Higgins went to Croydon, where he remained for many years, and where he married. Returning at length to Sidcot, he settled in the house between Sidcot Lodge and the old Meeting-house, and became a well-known occupant of the Ministers' gallery in the present Meeting-house, where, however, he very seldom spoke. He was the plainest of plain Friends; and there can be little doubt that his Quakerly attire, with broad-brimmed hat, straight-collared coat, and closely-fitting knee-breeches, fairly represented the costume of the Sidcot of half a century before.

A marked characteristic of the early years of the School's history was the frequent changes in the Staff, from the Superintendent to the servants. That these changes did not conduce to the prosperity of the Institution may easily be imagined. Nor is it surprising to find that, in 1812, the Committee made a Minute to the effect that it was desirable that there should be more order in the Boys' School. At the same time, John Benwell and Joseph Naish, who had been specially deputed to take care of the "upper house," were appointed "to consider of some plan, and to carry the same into effect without delay." A Minute of 1814 records briefly that the Boys' School appeared "to be conducted in an

orderly manner." How order was restored is not specified. But it is probable that some of the credit is due to Thomas Whalley, who came to Sidcot as assistant in October 1813, and remained for seven years. His salary was at first £45; but when, in 1814, he married, the Committee agreed to let him live out of the house, and gave him £100 a year, with the following stipulations, which throw some light on the duties of a teacher of the time :—

"In summer to be at the School from seven till eight, mornings: from rather before nine till little after twelve o'clock. Writing-books, &c., to be prepared before two, and school again rather before two till little after five o'clock, and books prepared before morning. Reading half past seven o'clock, and to attend the boys to bed.

"In winter no morning school. T. W. to attend Reading (having breakfasted) 1/4 after eight; rest as in summer. On First Days to be at the School from two till four o'clock afternoon, at Reading at 1/2 past six, and to attend the boys to bed.

"When the Master and Mistress are absent from the School, as at Bristol or a Monthly or Quarterly Meeting, T. Whalley is to be at the School entirely."

For some years Thomas Whalley seems—except for the help of monitors, who are casually alluded to—to have managed the forty boys quite single-handed, unless he received assistance from the Committee-Friend who, for want of a properly qualified Superintendent, was then the Head of the School. His duties were further increased in 1817, when he undertook to keep the School accounts, his salary being at the same time raised to £125 a year. It was doubtless thought a handsome stipend, but the Committee certainly got a good deal for their money.

In the records of 1815 appears the name of the first Sidcot apprentice, a name so familiar to many living Sidcot scholars that it is difficult to realize that the bearer of it was at school little less than a century ago. It was before the Battle of



Waterloo was fought that it was agreed that Henry Dymond, then aged about fourteen, should be indentured for seven years, being provided with board, lodging and clothes, and receiving 7s. a quarter for three years, 10s. 6d. a quarter for two years, and 14s. a quarter for the remainder of his time. His duties were thus defined by the Committee:—

“During Cyphering, that he attend to some of the minor boys, and to those who do no Cyphering.

“In Reading, that he attend to the first class as Monitor.

“In Spelling, that he hear one or two of the lower classes if Thomas Whalley has not time to attend to them all.

“In Writing, that he attend to some of the worst Writers, and that he rule and prepare the copy-books.

“In Grammar, that he Parse with the first class, and assist T. W. in hearing the boys their lessons in case any Monitor should be absent.

“In Geography, that he attend to those boys’ lessons who are not in the class, or engaged by T. W. at the Maps, also to those boys who learn no Geography.

“That he take the books out of the drawers for Reading, Cyphering, &c., and give out Copies, Books, &c., in any Monitor’s absence.

“And also attend to any other general matters as occasion may require.”

Henry Dymond served nearly, but not quite, the full term of his apprenticeship. His time would have expired in July 1822. He left in December 1821, and in the reason for his going there is a touch of romance such as one would hardly look for in the sober pages of a Committee Minute-book. The young dominie was indentured on the 22nd of July 1815, and his name appears again in connection with the foregoing list of his duties. After that the Records are silent about him until September 1821, when it was reported to the Committee that “Henry Dymond, an apprentice to the School, was in the habit of paying frequent visits to the Governess of the Girls’ School; on which the Committee



called him before them and pointed out to him the impropriety of a young man of the Boys' School visiting the Girls' School, and requested him to discontinue his visits, they being contrary to good order."

The young delinquent, then aged about twenty, and receiving the not very dazzling salary of three pounds per annum, quietly disregarded the injunction, and "continued his visits there as frequently as before." The Committee which met on 15th October, informed their recalcitrant apprentice that "he could not be allowed to go to the Girls' School at all." His reply was that "he could give the Committee no reason to expect an alteration in his conduct." Who the Governess was who thus attracted him is not specified in the indictment, but we are introduced to her in other Minutes of the Committee.

When Elizabeth Wansbrough left the School in 1814, her place was filled, after some months' interval, by Mary Wylde, who, after a preliminary trial, apparently without salary, settled down for several years, leaving in 1818, in consequence of difficulties in the household.

John and Margaret Crouch, the first paid Heads of the School, were succeeded in 1812, by two volunteers, Robert and Lydia Gregory. The former had been on the Committee a year before, and the latter was still a member of it. The appointment was regarded as a temporary one; but the authorities were evidently glad to be able to report to the General Meeting, year after year, that the two Friends were willing to continue in office. Robert Gregory died in the spring of 1817; the first and only Sidcot Superintendent who died at his post. Lydia Gregory remained in command, and her late husband's official place was filled by another volunteer from the Committee, Joseph Naish, who had already had some experience in the management of the School.

Early in the following year, Joseph Naish gave notice that he wished to resign his appointment as Honorary Superintendent. The announcement was clearly a surprise

to the Committee, and five Friends were deputed to enquire into the circumstances. They found that "the cause of Joseph Naish's intended retirement arises from a want of harmony and co-operation between Lydia Gregory and Mary Wylde, to which his being so frequent a witness renders his situation too painful to fill." The sub-committee further gave it as their opinion that while it was "necessary that one of the parties should leave" the Institution, "it would most tend to its best interests that Lydia Gregory should remain in her present situation." The five Friends wished it to be understood that the "want of harmony between the two officers" was the sole ground for their verdict. "In all other respects we are fully satisfied that Mary Wylde as well as Lydia Gregory are peculiarly well fitted for their stations."

After Mary Wylde left, in the summer of 1818, the girls, then about thirty in number, were in charge of an assistant, Mary Oliver Taw, a girl of eighteen, who received for her services the sum of thirty shillings per annum. Except for a few months,—from August, 1819 to April 1820—there was no governess or senior teacher in the Girls' House for two years. During this interval the girls were partly taught by volunteers from the Committee, two of whom came and stayed in the house. There is little ground for wonder that Mary Oliver Taw's health broke down. She left the School invalided, and died in 1820.

The year 1820 was an unsettled one in the management of the School. Joseph Naish and Lydia Gregory resigned their posts at the summer. Out of four candidates for the vacant Head-mastership, John Dafforn Ellis was selected, at a salary of £130 per annum; and at the same time Edith Frank was engaged as Governess, at £25 a year. But neither she nor the new Heads of the Institution could be at their posts on the opening day. And when school began, after the summer vacation of 1820, not only were there no Superintendents, but there was no schoolmaster for the boys,

and neither schoolmistress nor assistant for the girls. The want of these officials was temporarily supplied, as had so often happened before, by volunteers from the Committee. The only salaried officer in the place was the young apprentice Henry Dymond.

The new Heads of the School, John Dafforn Ellis and his wife, arrived in August. Their stay was brief, which is not surprising, when we consider what must have been the state of disorganisation at the time. Their coming was notified to the General Meeting of 1821, in a brief Report, of which the first paragraph announced that the new Superintendents had arrived in the previous August, whilst the last paragraph informed the meeting that they had already given notice of their wish to leave in the following August.

It was in the autumn of that year that Henry Dymond's visits to the Girls' House attracted the attention of the Committee. The remonstrances of that Body proving of no avail, the undaunted young lover was called before a special sitting, held in Bristol. He then declared that he would "submit to their directions," but he requested to be allowed "occasionally to visit the young woman." To this the Committee refused their sanction, until Henry Dymond should have produced the written consent "of his mother and the young woman's father."

The visits, however, continued, sanction or no sanction; and the culprit, arraigned for the third time, gave the Committee "no reason to expect that he would conform to their directions." At a later sitting he declared his wish that "the intimacy with the Governess"—whose name is not once mentioned in the whole affair—might "be considered with a view to a matrimonial alliance," adding that both parents had given their consent.

Henry Dymond was called before the Committee for the last time, in November 1821, and informed that, as it would be "very improper and injurious to the interests of the Institution" for him to stay in it, he must leave, "in one

month." He left accordingly, as the records show. But the Governess, Edith Frank, the young lady whose attractions had raised all this storm, promptly gave notice that she was going, too; and the lovers left Sidcot within a few weeks of each other. When, a little later, Henry Dymond's sister Miriam applied for the post of Governess, the authorities, smarting perhaps under a sense of what had recently happened, told her that they were "not prepared to make any alteration in the officers of the Girls' House at present." Clearly, "No Dymond need apply!"

Edith Frank, being a salaried teacher, received no official gift on leaving. But it is interesting to know that, in spite of the trouble he had given them, Henry Dymond was presented by the authorities with thirty shillings, two suits of clothes, two hats, six shirts, six pair of stockings, six neck-handkerchiefs, two pocket-handkerchiefs, and two pair of shoes, "all of good and sufficient quality." This was a usual practice, in the case of apprentices who had completed their full term, and had given satisfaction. That the presentation was made in this particular instance, may be regarded as proof that, in all respects save one, the young teacher was considered to have done his duty by the Institution.

So passed from Sidcot the high-spirited Governess and her bold young lover. Long afterwards,—a whole generation afterwards,—the pair, as Henry and Edith Dymond, came back, the Master and Mistress of the School. Every vestige of the Girls' House had by that time disappeared. No stone was left standing on another that could have been associated with that far away romance. The avenue of limes had gone. The apple-trees that once had filled the centre of the precincts had all been cleared away. But it needs no very wild flight of the imagination to picture the two grave and reverend seigniors, pacing slowly up and down the altered Long Garden, pausing in the shadow of the familiar elms, or of the old oak that, to the schoolboys of fifty years since,

still bore Henry Dymond's name ; recalling now the perfume of the long-vanished limes, and now reminding each other, with delight, of every detail of the episode that, so many years before, had called down upon his head the wrath of the Committee.

If only we had known the story !



## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOL-LIFE FROM 1808-1821

THE course of study laid down in the original Rules and Regulations for the management of Sidcot School was, like everything else connected with the establishment, severely simple. Five Subjects of Instruction only, are named:—Reading, Writing, English Grammar, Arithmetic and Geography. No mention of History, or even of Scripture. From the outset, however, provision was made for further teaching. The General Meeting was left free to add to the above brief list “any other branches of learning” that it might “think proper and direct.” Boys might, in special cases, learn Latin, if the Master was qualified to teach it. We have no means of knowing if any scholars, before the year 1821, availed themselves of this privilege. Three boys did so, in the early twenties, and learnt Latin in play-time. The omission of Scripture from the curriculum probably arose from the fact that the teaching of it was taken for granted. It was certainly taught; largely, if not entirely, by means of a Catechism. We also have glimpses, in the titles of books bought by order of the Committee, of such subjects as Trigonometry and Mensuration. There were, also, early purchases of single copies of History books; and some slight attention seems, in the same way, to have been paid to Science.

Repetition of the Catechism above briefly alluded to was, for a long period, a prominent feature of the General Meeting Examination. In 1810, a small committee appointed to examine “the different catechisms in use in Friends’ Schools,” reported that none seemed altogether suitable, but that they

themselves had "prepared an essay towards another compilation." The General Committee approved this precious "essay," and laid it before the General Meeting of 1811. That body, equally unsuspicious, "weightily considered it," and sent it up to the Yearly Meeting, for "revision and approbation." Approbation was, however, the last thing apparent in the attitude of the Yearly Meeting. Friends found, on comparing the manuscript of the "essay" with a work lately published by John Bevans, entitled "A Brief View of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, as professed by the Society of Friends: in the form of Question and Answer," that "full three-fourths of the proposed Catechism was literally taken from the said publication"; and they declined taking the matter under further consideration until the Sidcot Committee had obtained the consent of John Bevans to this appropriation of his property. This consent he refused to give. The difficulty was solved by the adoption, by the School, of the original work in its entirety; and the book was in regular use until 1830.

So much use was made, in early days, of John Bevans' "Brief View," that Mary Ricketts (née Frank) who was at School at Sidcot in 1818, could remember no other book. The copy that she learnt from lies before the writer at this moment. To its stained and time-worn leaves still cling the faded petals of flowers which the young school-girl may have gathered, ninety years ago, in the long border that skirted the south wall of the Long Garden.

It is a slim little volume of 141 pages, and it is bound in paper boards of that peculiar and not very attractive shade of grey that characterizes so many old Friends' books. It contains 107 Questions chiefly doctrinal, and most of them relating to Jesus Christ. Each Question is followed by a brief Answer, which is supported by "Proofs," in the form of extracts from the Bible. A few specimens will show the character of this once all-important school-book:—

"30th Q. What were the promises of God to Abraham?

"A. He promised to make Abraham the father of a great nation, and that his children should possess that land in which he sojourned as a stranger: and, further, that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed."

Then follow the "Proofs"; that is to say, extracts from Genesis xii., xv., xvii., and xxii.

"47th Q. Were the prophecies respecting Christ fulfilled in every particular?"

"A. They were: Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, in the days of Augustus Caesar, the first Emperor of Rome; lived a life of poverty, performed many miracles, such as casting out devils, giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, and restoring the dead to life; and was finally put to the ignominious death of the cross, at the instigation of the Jews, by Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judea in the time of Tiberius Caesar, the successor of Augustus; but on the third day he rose from the dead."

The "Proofs," which in this instance occupy seven pages, consist of extracts from the Gospels and the Epistles.

"103rd Q. When our Saviour brake the bread and said 'Do this in remembrance of me,' did he perpetuate the Jewish Passover as an ordinance in the Christian church?"

"A. Such a conclusion is not authorised by the Scriptures; the disciples to whom Christ addressed these words were Jews, who were therefore desired by him, whenever they ate the Jewish Passover, to do it in remembrance of him the true paschal Lamb and bread of life."

The "Proof," in this case, is taken from 1 Corinthians, xi., 23-26.

The first impulse is, perhaps, to condemn, without qualification, so mechanical a method; but the frequent repetition of these Answers and Proofs involved a fairly thorough grounding in much of what was then regarded as of vital importance in the teaching of the Bible.

It is difficult to form any very definite idea of the state of

Education at Sidcot, a century ago. The General Meeting received, from the first, Reports, on "the state of learning" of both boys and girls; and it will surprise no one acquainted with school-life to learn that the verdict was almost always an indulgent and favourable one. In 1811, for instance, it was reported that the boys had "made a satisfactory progress considering the infant state of the Institution, and the variety of concerns which have engaged the attention of its managers." Much attention was paid in those days—in that respect, those good old days—to reading aloud; and the subject was often commented on in the Reports, not always favourably. In 1816 it was found that much care had evidently been devoted "not only to the various branches of learning in the School, but to the deportment of the young people, which has appeared highly pleasing." Rules for Conduct and Deportment were early drawn up by the Committee, and it was directed that these should be read aloud to the scholars "once in the month."

Under the third of these Rules the boys were enjoined—

"When spoken to by strangers to give a modest but audible answer standing up with their faces towards those who speak to them. In their whole conduct and conversation to be dutiful to their masters and mistresses, kind and affectionate to their school-fellows, and that in all cases they observe the command of Christ 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"

The seventh Rule to be observed by the girls required that—

"They are to be careful to conduct themselves in a sober, orderly manner in going to and returning from Meeting, and when there to behave seriously, avoiding restless and unbecoming gestures, remembering that it is an indispensable duty, when assembled for so solemn a purpose, to guard against all unprofitable, irreligious thoughts, in order to be favoured with a proper disposition to offer acceptable worship."



Some light is thrown on what were regarded by the authorities as "restless and unbecoming gestures" by the recollections of Mary Ricketts (née Frank), who, as already stated, entered the School in 1818, and who died in 1906, in the hundredth year of her age. To the end of her days she remembered how, months before coming to Sidcot, she had endeavoured to train herself in accordance with what she had heard would be expected of her. In Bristol Meeting-house, which she attended, was a row of marks upon the floor, showing where women Friends were in the habit of leaving their pattens. On these marks Mary Frank practised the art of looking down; knowing, as she said, that if any young Quakeress in Sidcot Meeting was so forgetful of decorum as to raise her eyes from the ground, her name would be taken, then and there, by a mistress who sat in front, and who was always on the watch to see that no fair scholar broke this eleventh commandment.

The state of Education at that early period was probably not so good as the old General Meeting Reports would suggest. It was the opinion of Mary Ricketts that the girls of her time learnt little or nothing beyond the eternal Catechism. A large part of her time was spent in the laundry, where she occasionally kept time to the monotonous turning of the mangle by singing hymns softly to herself. To herself; since, as it is hardly necessary to state, singing was sternly discountenanced by the authorities. In spite of prohibitions, however, one of the sewing-women, who had a beautiful voice, used to delight the girls of Mary Frank's time with West Country songs, when the Superintendent was safely out of ear-shot. A scholar of a little later period, James Clark, who entered Sidcot in 1821, considered that there was no systematic teaching in his time, at all; and declared that many boys took three months to learn the multiplication-table, although they had very little else to do.

To the disorganised state of the School towards the close of the period between 1808 and 1821—due largely, no doubt,



to the constant changes in, and the scanty numbers of the Staff—must be attributed the unfavourable Report of the latter year, when the Committee appointed to examine the boys felt themselves “under the necessity of informing the General Meeting that they observe but little improvement.” It would have taken an exceptionally good disciplinarian to keep order under the conditions that prevailed; and it is not surprising to find that, in the closing years of this period, it was found necessary to send three boys away. The first case was in 1817, almost immediately after the holidays. The guarded expression “The conduct of the children has been in general satisfactory,” which occurs in the Report to the previous General Meeting, suggests that all had not been well. It was reported to the Committee that one of the boys had twice run away, that he had been “otherwise of very improper behaviour,” and that there was “little hope of his amendment.” The delinquent was accordingly expelled. In 1820 a similar fate befell two brothers, who, “having for a long series of time been guilty of insubordination and inattention to the reproofs of their masters” were sentenced to expulsion that day week. It was in the same year that the authorities came to the conclusion that some of the boys had too much pocket-money; and the next General Meeting made a Rule that, in future, all money must be given up to the Superintendent.

The school-books in use in 1808 included Lindley Murray’s famous “Grammar,” which had been published thirteen years before, the same writer’s “Spelling-Book,” “Reader,” and “Sequel to the Reader,” Goldsmith’s “Geography,” and treatises on arithmetic by Vyse, Joyce, and Walkingame. Several of these books continued in use for sixty years. The title of one of the Arithmetics passed into a proverb. A favourite saying of Edmund Wheeler—the inimitable lecturer whose memory is cherished by hundreds, if not thousands of those who were educated in Friend’s Schools—when he wished to convey the idea that an action was not to

be commended, was "That's not according to Walkingame!" It was also at this early period that the Committee purchased about sixty volumes, chiefly on religious subjects, but including Goldsmith's Abridged Histories of England, Greece and Rome, and Cowper's Poems. This selection, which may be regarded as the foundation of the School Library, comprised "Journals" by no fewer than fifteen different Friends.

In 1811 the Meeting for Sufferings sent down a present of about 200 volumes, the majority of which were Friends' books. They included Barclay's "Apology" in English, French, Danish, Spanish, German, in addition to the original Latin; a "Treatise on Silence," in English and French; Penn's "Primitive Christianity," in English and Welsh; the same author's "Call to Christendom," in German, his "No Cross, No Crown," in French, and his "Summary of our Principals," in English, French, and German. A large proportion of these books, many of them looking as if they had rarely been opened, cumbered the Library shelves within the recollection of the writer. In 1814 the question of adding more books to the "Library" was discussed in Committee, month after month; with the result that two fresh volumes were bought. In 1818, some Friend, whose name is not recorded, offered to present a number of books to the Institution; but a sub-committee reported that "the introduction of them is not eligible." Tales, perhaps. There may even have been a copy of "Waverley" among them.

There were few regular school-desks in early days. Even after 1821 most of the scholars appear to have been provided only with forms. To be allowed a desk was then, so James Clark declared, a signal mark of honour. Slates were, of course, used for all ordinary work. Paper was costly, and lead-pencils were so dear as to be almost unknown. In 1808 foolscap paper was 25s. a ream. In 1812, the same quantity of "paper for letters," cost a sovereign. The authorities made their own ink, and some of it has lasted well. The

pens were, of course, always quills. Such entries as "quills, 1200, 14s. 2d.," often occur in the early Records. Blotting-paper is not mentioned. In those days, sand was scattered over wet writing by means of a Pounce-Box; "pounce," strictly speaking, being the pounded contents of the so-called "bone" of the cuttle-fish.

The diet of the scholars was settled by an early Minute of the Committee. At breakfast there was to be milk, "except when scarce, and then some other substitute, at the discretion of the Superintendent." No mention of bread. For dinner there was to be pudding and meat. For supper—as the evening meal was called until quite recent times—the fare was "bread, with cheese or butter or milk." If cheese or butter was chosen, the drink was water. The drink at dinner was to be "beer of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  bushels of malt to the hogshead." One of the rules was that there was to be "no unnecessary talking at meals."

Sidcot scholars of that far-off day do not appear to have retained very pleasant recollections of the fare that was provided for them. Breakfast, according to a scholar of 1821, depended on the caprice of the waiters. Those out of favour got nothing at all but stale bread. For dinner, so the same authority declares, there was sometimes nothing but soup. Traditions still survive of the dinners under Lydia Gregory's rule, when one bullock's heart was considered sufficient for forty boys. Such entries in the cash-book, in 1813 and 1814, as

"Calves henge 3s., heart 2s. 6d., calvs head 2s.  
60 dozen herrings, £1, 5s. od.  
sprats, 32 pounds, 41 dozen herrings.  
two inwards, 2s. 2d."

are ominous of a lamentable parsimony. "Henge" is not an ordinary dictionary word, but it is still in use in the neighbourhood of the School. "Can you tell me," said the writer, lately, to a local butcher, "what a henge is?"

"Oh, yes, sir," was the answer.

"Well, what is it?" was the next question.

"Oh, it's just the henge," was the reply.

Further examination elicited the information that, by the word henge, butchers understand the heart, lungs and liver of any animal, especially of the calf. "Inwards," on the other hand, is a dictionary word, and was even used by Pope in his translation of Homer:—

"—to his sire assigns  
The tasteful inwards and nectareous wines."

*Odyssey* xx. 325.

By a pig's "innards," as we call it, we of the West Country mean those obscure portions of the animal's internal arrangements which do not rise to the dignity of "henge," and which, it is perhaps hardly necessary to add, do not often appear upon the tables of the well-to-do. Talking of pigs, pork, either fresh or salted, must have been a fairly common article of diet, for in early days the School bought many pigs. In 1811 "Piggs, two," cost £5, 10s. Perhaps the animals were heavier in 1818, when "Piggs for two,"—an expression which, owing to the omission of a comma, is rendered slightly ambiguous, and is suggestive of an abundance quite out of keeping with the time, and even of gluttony—cost half as much again.

Some things which are now commonly looked upon as necessities, were luxuries, ninety years ago. For example, we find early entries of tea at 11s. a pound, loaf-sugar at 1s. 1d., moist sugar at 1s., pepper at 2s. 10d., mustard at 2s. 6d., and chocolate (bought from Fry and Hunt, as far back as 1812) at 7s. a pound. In 1819, nutmegs, now about 2d. an ounce, cost the School eight times that sum. Those were days of dear bread. The famine-point seems to have been reached in 1817, when the quartern loaf cost 1s. 6d. The effect of such a price is plain to see in the accounts. There were only four scholars more, in 1817, than there had been in



1816, yet the sum expended on bread in 1817 was £150 more than it had been in the previous year.

It is interesting, too, to note that some common necessities cost much the same to-day as they did nearly a century ago. Milk, for example, was 2d. a quart, at a very early period; while butter, at the same time, was 1s. 4d. a pound. Coal was dear, probably because of the expense of transport, and, for many years, was as high as 23s. a ton.

Much money was, in those days, spent on beer and other strong liquors. In 1814, the first year in which the total was separately reported, "Ale, Beer, and Cider" cost the School £72, 1s. 6d., while the sum spent on milk was only £35, 6s. In 1821, the last year of the period in question, the figures are reversed. Beer, ale and cider then cost £32, 19s. 6d., and milk £63, 7s. The last notice of Beer in the General Meeting Reports is in 1843, when this entry occurs:—"Ale, Beer and Cider, remainder of last year's stock £1, 11s." While these humbler liquors sufficed for the children's table, stronger waters—port, sherry, rum, and gin—were bought, probably for the use of the Committee; sometimes, to judge from the dates of the entries, for Friends assembled at the General Meeting.

The costume prescribed by the Regulations was eminently of simple and Quakerly character; and the Superintendent was early enjoined "to report to the Committee if any striking deviation from plainness and simplicity appear in the clothing sent with the children." There was no special uniform. But as it was the Rule that no clothing might be sent after the children had returned to school, and as the Institution, with certain stock materials, replaced such articles of dress as wore out within the year—there was then no winter vacation—it may be imagined that, by the time the summer holidays came round again, there must have been a good deal of sameness in the attire, both in style and in material. Throughout the whole of the period from 1808 to 1821, the School provided regulation Friends' coats for



the older boys, and short, collarless jackets for the younger ones, of dark brown or claret-coloured cloth, with waistcoats of the same stuff or of nankeen. All the boys wore knee-breeches of corduroy—often called “velveteen,” in the old accounts—drab stockings, and shoes. The one article of underclothing was a shirt of dowlas, a material so stiff that a garment made of it would stand upright, unsupported. Dowlas was originally a coarse linen, but at a later period the name was applied to a strong, cotton imitation. Leather-breeches are mentioned once only; having doubtless been supplied to some harum-scarum youngster who had specially distinguished himself by the ruin of his corduroys. Trousers are not mentioned in the first Code of Regulations, but they were not entirely unknown, although not then popular in England generally. It is said indeed that in 1812 an order was made by the authorities of St John’s and Trinity Colleges that “every young man who appeared in Hall or Chapel in pantaloons or trousers” should be considered as absent. And in 1820, the founders of a Bethel Chapel at Sheffield inserted a clause in the trust-deed ordaining that “under no circumstances whatever shall any preacher be allowed to occupy the pulpit who wears trousers.” Hats and shoes were bought wholesale by the Committee, and boys were, of course, fitted with the nearest size in stock. The former were of a fixed pattern, and broad-brimmed. An early scholar speaks of them as “inflexible dog-hair, hard enough to stand on.”

By an agreement dated 1810, Charles Strode, who, it will be remembered, lived in the house that occupied nearly the same site as Rose Cottage, and who was chemist and post-master, as well as tailor, undertook “personally” to make the boys’ clothes, at a cost of 19s. the suit, finding everything except the cloth; and to repair the clothing at 10s. per head. The latter estimate soon proved too modest, and the allowance was increased.

A scholar of some years later thus wrote of the feminine

costume of his time, which was probably much the same as that of this earlier period :—"The girls wore a uniform dress of cotton or stuff, white tippets and sleeves, and Friends' silk bonnets; and it was a pretty sight to see them, all dressed alike, drop into their seats at meeting." There was not, however, as has already been stated, any specified uniform for either boys or girls. The similarity was the inevitable result of the fact that, when a girl's frock wore out, it was replaced, according to a scholar of 1818, by "an ugly brown dress" made on the premises, either of "bombazet" or "calimanco." And although, on all public occasions, all the inmates of the Lower House, teachers and scholars alike, wore the regulation Friends' bonnets of paste-board and silk, straw bonnets—without a vestige of any approach to decoration—were allowed in the garden.

Some of the materials in use a century ago have gone altogether out of fashion. "Grandrill" is not even to be found in the *Encyclopædic Dictionary*. Bombazet, of which the girls' frocks were made, was a thin woollen cloth. It differed from bombazine in having no silk in its composition. Calimanco, of which we often read in the old accounts, was another woollen material, fashionable in Addison's time. Some of the other materials used by the School dressmakers of a hundred years ago are very suggestive of the style and tone of the costume of the age :—fustian, gingham, hessian, thickset (a variety of fustian), Russia (duck), nankeen, brown-holland and galloon (a kind of tape for edging and binding).

The occupations of out-of-school hours were very different from those in vogue to-day. Both boys and girls had to sweep and dust their rooms, to clean their knives and shoes, and to light their fires. The girls helped in the kitchen and laundry, and the boys in the garden and on the farm. Games were few. Cricket and football were quite unknown. The boys were seldom allowed out of bounds; but every Saturday afternoon, which was at first the only holiday, they

went for a walk. The boys' playground formed part of the space now occupied by the modern playground. For the girls there appears to have been no playing-place except what was called the Avenue, that is to say, the gravelled walk under the elms in the Long Garden—known in our time as the "Committee Friends"—and the broad path between the two long rows of lime-trees that, for more than five and thirty years after the School was founded, occupied so much of the space between the elms and the bottom of the garden. Here the girls amused themselves with skipping and swinging. Mary Ricketts could remember nothing of the nature of a game.

It is hardly necessary to say that both houses were lighted by means of candles and rush-lights. A "chamber-lamp" which, in 1813, cost four shillings cannot have been a powerful source of illumination. Lucifer matches did not come into use until about 1834. Matches there were, but they were thin, flat splinters of wood, wood such as band-boxes are made of, and tipped with sulphur, for use in connection with the "fire-flints," purchased three-pennyworth at a time, and the "tinder-box and steel," costing eightpence, of which we read in the early accounts.

Neither the boys' nor the girls' school appears to have possessed an adequate water-supply; and one of the very first concerns of the Committee was to sink a well. As early as June 1809 it was decided to begin "in the upper end of the orchard," which would be about the middle of the present Long Garden. But in the following month a spot was found "at the boys' school." After four months' work, and with the expenditure of £200, the shaft had been sunk to a depth of nearly 300 feet without finding water, and the Committee resolved to discontinue operations. The work was, however, continued; and at a depth of about 400 feet the men came upon a good spring. In August 1810 it was announced that the well was completed, and that there was now an abundant supply of water. The next question was,

how to raise the water from so great a depth. In the same year we read of a "four-inch cast-iron pump," costing £100. It was worked by the boys, with "an upright capstan and bars." In 1812 a "horse-wheel" was substituted for the capstan and the boys' labour. In 1813 a fly-wheel was added, and the Institution was declared to be amply supplied with water.

A mason whose name is frequently mentioned in the accounts, in connection with work at the pump-house, and with the building of walls, and of whom we read as early as 1811, a man named John Nigh, was still a familiar figure at Sidcot within the recollection of the writer; and stories are still current of the old man's quaint expressions and of his original use of words. It was John Nigh who used to come up to the School, and express a wish to "zee the Maaster, 'coz I do want to inzult un a bit." He it was who, speaking of the days before he signed the Pledge and became a well-conducted member of society, declared, "Why, when I did drink, 'twere nothin' vur I to come whöam on a Zaturday night, zometimes wi' one black eye, zometimes wi' two, and zometimes wi' DREE!"

There is no allusion in the records to any accident in connection with the well; but there are traditions that many mishaps occurred. A son of Charles Strode was, indeed, killed by the machinery about the year 1820; and it is believed that, after that happened, the well was no longer used. The position of it was pointed out to the writer, many years ago, by an old scholar who remembered it in use, and who recalled the fatal accident to young Strode. The site of it is under the flags at the south-west corner of the boys' playground, a few yards from the window of what was once the masters' study. The flags are probably some of those that were put there in 1857, when the stone floors of school-rooms and dining-rooms were replaced by wood.

For many years after the well was abandoned, drinking-water was fetched from Hale Well; and there are persons



still living who can remember seeing the great black horse, one of the famous Axbridge breed, drawing the water-cart across the fields. As early as 1820 the School paid David Lewis a yearly rent of five shillings, "For a road to the well." There is also a tradition that water for washing purposes was brought from Fuller's Pond—a well-known pool adjoining Church Lane, which may have been named after a former occupant of Oakridge. The arrangements for personal ablution, in the boys' house at any rate, were primitive in the extreme. For many years after 1810, when the Committee bought it for two guineas, the only apparatus was a stone trough, about twelve feet long. In this, as old scholars have declared, forty boys washed, as well as they could, without any changing of the water. As may be expected, there was great competition for first places. There was no bath of any sort, in the house or out of it. The boys bathed "about once in the season" in the Axe, at a point where that muddy little river is some three miles from the School. The girls, as may be imagined, were not allowed even this privilege.

In spite of the poor water-supply, there is no clear record of any dangerous illness between 1808 and 1821, except an outbreak of scarlet fever in both houses, in 1819. It was reported to be of a mild type, but it cost the Institution forty pounds, under the head of "Apothecary and Drugs." Such other attacks of sickness as there were are lightly passed over in the records. But, to judge from the doctor's bills, some of them must have been rather serious. A "Cutaneous disease on the head," which caused much trouble in 1811 and 1812, and which, in the opinion of the Committee, "excited unnecessary alarm," was ultimately checked by frequent head-washings, together with applications of tar. Doctor Blake seems to have been the first regular medical attendant, but nothing special is recorded of him. Of the kindness of Dr Parker, who lived at Cross, in the house now occupied by Edmund Ashby, James Clark, to the very end of



his long life, retained grateful recollections. Charles Strode, whose more usual employment was that of School tailor, kept a chemist's shop, and acted also as a general medical practitioner for both man and beast. Many of his prescriptions are still preserved. The drugs of that age were few and simple. Those bought by the School, for first-aid by the household authorities, included opodildoc, paregoric, Singleton's ointment, honey, sugar-candy, senna, camomile and pills, which, as far back as 1819, cost the conventional 1s. 1½d. a box. The juxtaposition of brimstone and treacle, in the accounts for 1814, is rather ominous, and suggests the methods of barbarism practised at Do-the-Boys Hall. The nurses who are frequently mentioned in connection with outbreaks of illness were, of course, entirely untrained, and were, as may be seen from the records, such charwomen as did not happen to be engaged in scrubbing floors; a system which, after all, did not greatly differ from that under which, in the writer's own school-days, sick children struggled back into convalescence.

Within a few years of the Establishment of the School, it was found necessary to build additional rooms for both boys and girls. In 1815 more space was wanted in another direction. It was in that momentous year that the Committee reported to the General Meeting that the Meeting-house of William Jenkins's time was insufficient to accommodate the children and the Staff, in addition to Friends resident in the neighbourhood. It was at first proposed to rebuild the old House—the one which still stands at the foot of the Long Garden, just outside the estate—and to make temporary use of "the large room at the Girls' School." Next year, however, it was decided to build a new house altogether, nearer to the Boys' part of the Institution. The site was presented by the General Meeting, on condition that the Monthly Meeting should find the funds for building. The necessary sum was soon raised by subscription, and the Meeting-house now in use was completed in the summer of

1817, at a cost of £1200. The first interment in the new graveyard was that of Robert Gregory, the Superintendent of the School, who died in the spring of the year in which the building was finished.

The old Meeting-house was sold in 1818, "except such part of the said plat of ground hereby assigned as has been used for burying ground" to "Peter Welsh of Sidcott" . . . . "for the sum of eighty pounds . . . . which said sum of eighty pounds is intended to be applied towards the expenses of purchasing the piece of ground on which the new meeting-house is lately erecting and for erecting the said meeting-house." The property thus (in part) disposed of originally came into Friends' hands in 1690, when it consisted of a cottage and garden. On the 19th of April in that year, Timothy Willis of Rowberrow, a Friend who is mentioned in Besse's "Sufferings," as having had goods taken from him in 1679, on account of "absence from Publick Worship," bought this cottage for "ffive and twenty pounds of Lawfull money of England . . . . for 1000 years, and one pepper corne, being lawfully demanded." On the very next day, the 20th of April 1690, Timothy Willis handed over his new property "for and in Consideration of the Somm of Tenn shillings of Lawfull money of England," to four trustees, "for the use and behoofe of the people of God now called Quakers by what name or names soever they may hereafter be called or distinguished for a sett Buryinge place or meettinge place for the said people or any others when they shall think meet att all times and seasons whatsoever as a people called and Redeemed ought of the superstitions and evill ways and worshippe of the world and in the everlasting light of the Sonn of God called to bear witness against the same." The property was thus practically a free gift. The "Consideration of the Somm of Tenn shillings" was probably merely paid because of the suspicion with which gifts of land were viewed. The cottage was used for public worship by Sidcot Friends from 1690 to 1718, when the first Meeting-

house was built, largely, no doubt, in consequence of the growth of William Jenkins's School.

The old Meeting-house of 1718 and the more northerly of the two cottages which are divided from it by the steep and narrow lane called Harborough Batch were the scene, less than twenty years before the foundation of the School, of a remarkable occurrence, whose details, whether due to supernatural agency or to mere trickery, have never been explained, and upon which is founded the Sidcot ghost-story.

The house across the lane was the residence of a man called George Beacham, a man who passed in the district not only for a cattle-doctor, but a conjurer. Tradition even credits him with wearing a red cap and with the possession of a wizard's staff and magic books. When he was at the point of death he told his wife to bury him, not in consecrated ground, but at the adjoining four cross-roads, so that as he lay in his grave he might have the amusement of watching the passers-by.

"If 'ee don't," said the old man, "I'll trouble 'ee." This last request of his was not complied with, however; and on "July ye 27 1788," as we learn from the Parish Register, his ashes were laid in Winscombe churchyard.

A year went by. And then, one Wednesday morning, the 22nd of July 1789, twelve months, apparently to the very day, after the old wizard had departed this life, while Friends were sitting in Meeting, John Benwell's boys among them, a terrified woman, a woman who lived with the Conjurer's widow, and who also, it is said, was care-taker of the Meeting-House, came rushing in, and broke the solemn stillness by crying:

"Oh, neighbours, do 'e come! Here be all Widow Beacham's things a-vallin' about the vloor!"

Two Friends, John Benwell and Charles Strode, got up, walked quietly out, crossed the lane to the Beacham cottage, and saw, so the story goes, chairs and tables, pots and pans

dancing about the room, and the kneading-trough which the widow used in making the cakes which she sold in her little shop, rocking to and fro, as if moved by invisible hands. More than that, the astonished onlookers saw the dead man's boots clattering slowly downstairs into the kitchen. The two Friends looked and wondered. They could find no solution of the mystery. The disturbances had not ceased when Meeting broke up, and other Friends came across to see what had happened. Among them was John Benwell's daughter Hannah,—who subsequently married Arnee Frank. Long afterwards she used to describe how, as she entered the cottage kitchen, she had to avoid a large and heavy arm-chair that was moving slowly across the room.

Hannah More, whose labours among the Mendip miners began in the very year when this happened, is said to have driven over from Cowslip Green at Wrington to inquire into the circumstances. And the "favourite Mr Jones" of *Mendip Annals*, then curate and afterwards rector of Shipham, and who taught French in John Benwell's School, also visited the widow Beacham's cottage. But neither they nor any other inquirers could determine whether the disturbance was caused by the unquiet spirit of the disappointed necromancer, or whether it was merely the result of trickery. Trickery there may have been, but there was no evidence of it; nor, indeed, does it appear that there would have been any object in trickery; and no explanation was then, or at any later time, forthcoming. Jone Beacham, as her name is spelt in the Burial Register, survived her husband nearly six years, dying in January 1794. But he did not trouble her again. It was the Conjuror's last trick. The strange performance appears never to have been repeated.

Although substantially the same structure, with the same walls, the same roof and the same windows, the Meeting-house of 1817 was very different in appearance from the edifice that is in use to-day. In 1817 there was no vestibule, there were no cloak-rooms, and no eaves, there was no out-



side clock, no bell-turret, and practically no ventilation. As a once well-known attender and frequent and eloquent speaker there said of it in the bitterness of his soul, after a controversy which he never forgave, and after which he never again darkened the door of the house in which his voice had been so often heard, it was a "barn of a place." It was approached from opposite the door of the now vanished school playing-shed by a narrow path between hedges of hornbeam. On the far side of the right-hand hedge were the boys' gardens, much more extensive then than now. Over the hedge on the left was a small grass paddock, very useful to the care-taker's wife on washing-day. In the south wall of the Meeting-house, overlooking the quiet little graveyard, is a sun-dial, possibly the one for which the School, in 1812, paid the sum of half-a-guinea.

No ghostly legend hangs about the modern building. But it is still remembered in the village that, about the year 1833, a Sidcot Friend named Lavington Palmiter, who kept a shop where the Winscombe Post Office now stands, was so troubled in mind, as he sat in Meeting one Sunday, by the presentiment that there was something wrong at home, that he left before Friends dispersed, and hurried down to his house. There, sure enough, he surprised a burglar, in the very act of ransacking the shop. The robber was caught, tried, convicted, and transported to Van Dieman's Land, as Tasmania was called by its discoverer.

The broad highway that skirts the School precincts on the north and west was then, as now, the main road from London and Bristol to the West of England. Along it, in the early days of the School's history, passed a stream of stage-coaches, on their way to Exeter or Bristol, stopping at Green-Hill,—or even at the great gates which, until rather more than forty years ago, stood at the top of the eastern side of the boys' playground,—to set down passengers for Sidcot, although the nearest regular halting-place was the King's Arms, at Cross, now Mr Tilley's Farm. Coach-hire,



which was paid by the Institution at the rate of three-pence a mile, became very heavy in the case of those who had to travel long distances, and sometimes amounted to as much as three pounds for one scholar.

The postage of letters, which also was sometimes a heavy item, was charged to parents. One of the Rules was that children's letters must be post-paid. Another Rule was that all letters written by the girls were to be shown to the Superintendent. There seems to have been no regular censorship of the boys' correspondence, although their letters were certainly liable to examination for some years after this period. In 1815 the Post Office was at the house now called Sidcot Lodge, opposite the old turnpike. It was then removed to the thatched cottage which occupied nearly the same site as Rose Cottage; and at a still later period, perhaps after Charles Strode's death in 1835, the Post Office business was carried on in the house now known as the Convalescent Home, near Combe House. The Post-master then was a Friend who was also a farmer, and of whom it is still remembered that he used a plough drawn by two oxen, and that he kept them to their work with a goad.

The number of scholars in the school at the close of this period—that is to say, in 1821—was eighty-five; fifty boys and thirty-five girls, and there were three names on the list for admission. The total number admitted since the Foundation was then 331. The average cost, for the first complete year, ending at the General Meeting of 1810, was about £24 a head. Two years later it rose to the high figure of close on £29. The comparatively lavish expenditure of 1811 and 1812 was, however, promptly reduced; and in 1816 the cost per head had been brought down to £18. It is not difficult to see how it was done, and to detect the points where retrenchment was effected. No more port or sherry for the Committee. No more rum, except to mix with tar for doctoring the children's heads. Much less butcher's meat figures in the accounts; and

what there was is ominously suggestive that old tales were true, and that there were times when forty boys really did dine off one bullock's heart.

To manage the eighty-five children there were, at the time of the General Meeting of 1821, the Superintendent and his wife, a schoolmistress and an assistant in the Girls' House, and a solitary apprentice in the Boys' School. The servants consisted of one man and three maids. The amount paid in salaries from the General Meeting of 1809 to the General Meeting of 1810 was £39, 9s. In 1821 the sum entered under the same head, in the General Meeting Report, had increased to £130, 5s. 7d., of which the Superintendent received about half, for a half-year's services.

In 1815 William Allen, who was then specially interested in Education, visited Sidcot School, and afterwards made the following entry in his Diary:—

“Robert and Lydia Gregory superintended it gratuitously, and seem remarkably well qualified for the work. I was particularly delighted, not only with the system of order and neatness which pervades the whole, but especially with that part of the plan which initiates the children into habits of industry; most of the household work is done by them, only one servant being kept. The girls assist in the kitchen, and in washing, ironing, waiting at dinner, cleaning rooms, &c. The boys also have their distinct duties as waiters, sweepers of the school and bedrooms, furniture rubbers, etc. In one of the rooms the following card was hung up:

‘It is requested that the following instructions be particularly observed by the children:—

‘To do everything in its proper time; to keep everything to its proper use; and to put everything in its proper place; also that each fire may consume its own cinders.’

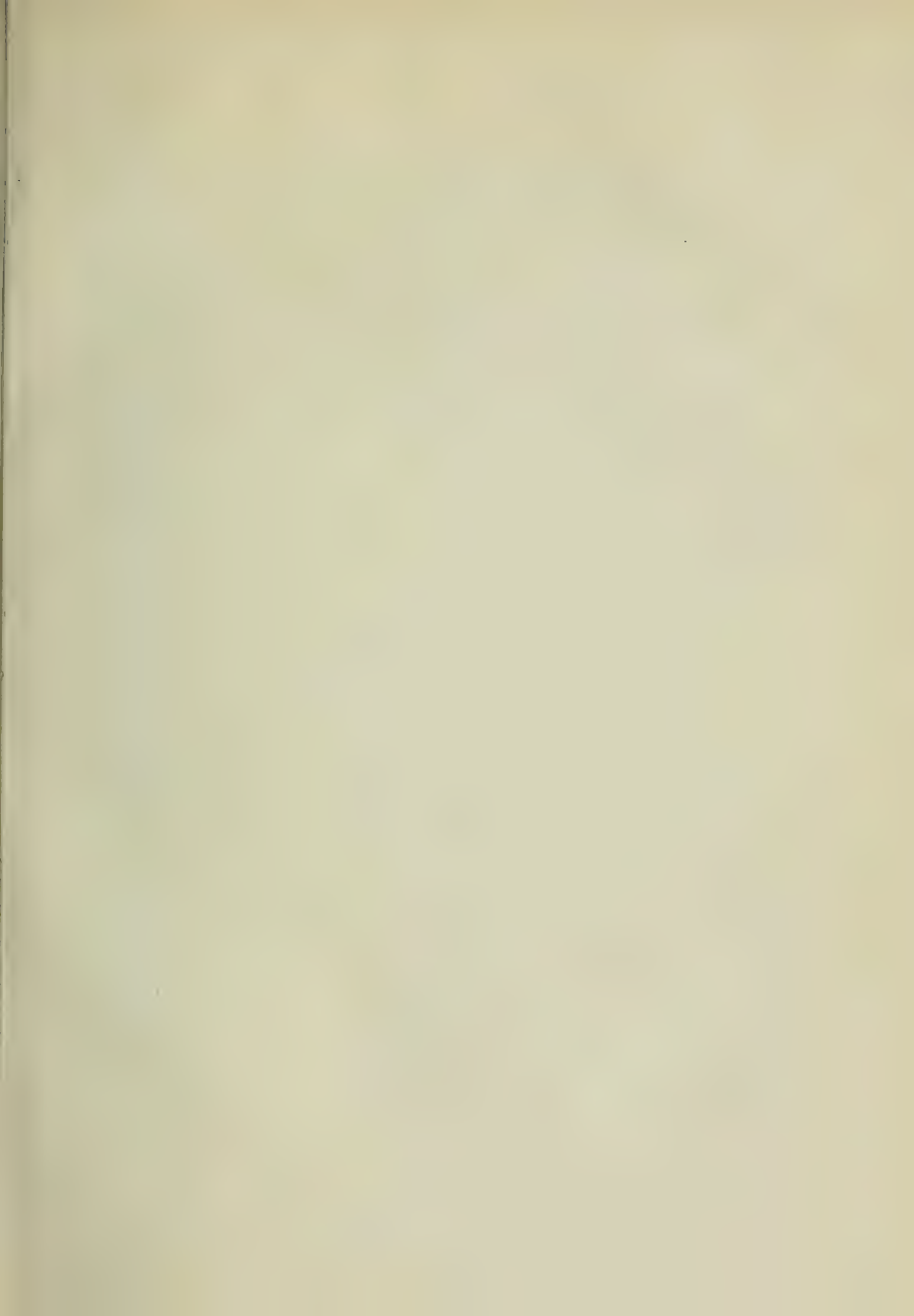
The Superintendent has a workshop, which, besides a turning-lathe and carpenter's tools, contains a forge. With the assistance of the boys, he completely built a shed, and tiled it. The boys are also employed in the garden and on

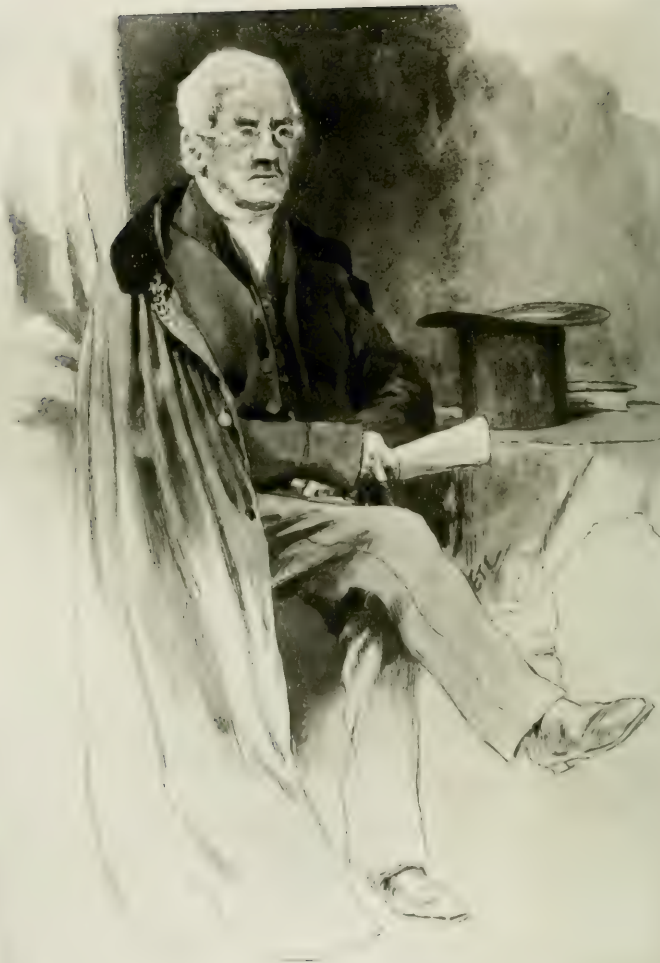
the land; in fact, I was strongly reminded of Fellenberg's system."

It was towards the close of this period that the dates of the General Meeting and of the holidays were for the first time definitely fixed, instead of being merely settled for one year in advance. In 1819 it was agreed that the General Meeting should always be held on the last Tuesday in April; and in 1820 the commencement of the vacation was fixed for the second Monday in June. The former of these two fixtures was not altered until quite recent times. The beginning of the summer holiday was, at a subsequent period, changed to a later date, but still in June.

This first period of the School's History, from the Foundation in 1808 to the year 1821, was a period of unrest and constant change. In the comparatively short space of thirteen years there were no fewer than six Superintendents, of whom only two were paid; and it would appear that these two and John Benwell were the only ones who knew anything about teaching. Those were days, moreover, in which members of the Committee constantly took part in the practical working of the School, stepping bravely into the breach when no professional assistance could be procured. Worthy of honour as they are, we may well imagine that Education did not make very rapid advance under the management of these intrepid amateurs.

The time of unsettlement was now, however, in great measure at an end. Shortly before the close of this period occurs the name of a new apprentice, Barton Dell. His strenuous personality was destined to make itself felt in many ways, and to a constantly increasing degree, for many subsequent years; and it was in large measure owing to him that, under the stern rule of William Batt, which lasted for eighteen years, a marked change now came over the management of the School.





*William Bather*



## CHAPTER V

WILLIAM BATT, 1821-1839

WILLIAM BATT became Superintendent of Sidcot in the summer of 1821, and he held the post for eighteen years, a tenure of office that has only been exceeded by that of Edmund Ashby, while it was nearly half as long again as the united terms of Government of the six Friends who, for longer or shorter periods, had ruled the School during the first thirteen years of its existence. He was an uneducated man, who, to quote from the Recollections of one of his scholars, "frequently murdered the King's English." He played a minor part in the School life, being overshadowed by the much more vigorous personalities of his very efficient wife, Sarah Batt, who has been described as the main-spring of the Institution, and of his first lieutenant, Barton Dell, who eventually became his son-in-law. He appears to have had very little to do with the boys, who, as one of them has declared, rarely saw him except in connection with their clothes.

It was no easy post that he had undertaken to fill. The School was far from being in a satisfactory condition. The difficulty of finding properly qualified teachers, or, indeed, of finding teachers at all, still continued. Nor was the difficulty lessened by the financial troubles of the Managing Committee, due to a rising expenditure and a falling income.

The Staff in the Boys' House then consisted of one assistant and one apprentice; the latter being Henry Dymond, the storm about whose visits to the Governess of the Girls' School was one of the new Head-master's early

trials. In the following November, it was decided to have two apprentices instead of one; and Barton Dell, who, as second apprentice, was shortly afterwards indentured, proved such a capable officer that he was promoted to the rank of head-teacher before his seven years had expired, and before he was twenty-one. He served the School for nearly eighteen years, which, again, is a period that has been exceeded by very few Sidcot teachers.

During Barton Dell's apprenticeship several assistants came and went, leaving, for the most part, but scanty memories behind them. No cause is assigned why Richard Cockin, pleasantly remembered by a scholar of the time as "a gentlemanly, kind-hearted man," should have stayed only a year and a half. But it is quite possible that he left because of the protests which he is known to have made against the excessive frugality of the house-keeping. John Faulder, again, seems to have been a capable as well as a very strict officer. But he, too, protested against the management; and that may have been the reason why, after four years' service, the Committee decided that he was "not in all respects suitable" for the post he held.

When John Faulder left, Barton Dell was promoted; and there was no further change in the Assistant-Mastership until 1839. Of the many boys who, during this period, tried their prentice hands at teaching, one stayed two months. Another stayed three and then went for a soldier. Another died at the end of the first year of his apprenticeship. Another held on for four years; but he then left in such a hurry that when the Committee decided that it was necessary that he should go, it was found that he had already disappeared. Very different was the career of Martin Lidbetter, who was indentured in 1834. In later years he won high encomiums from the authorities; and he and Henry Dymond were the only Sidcot apprentices who eventually became Superintendents of the School.

Among all these the most prominent was Barton Dell, who,

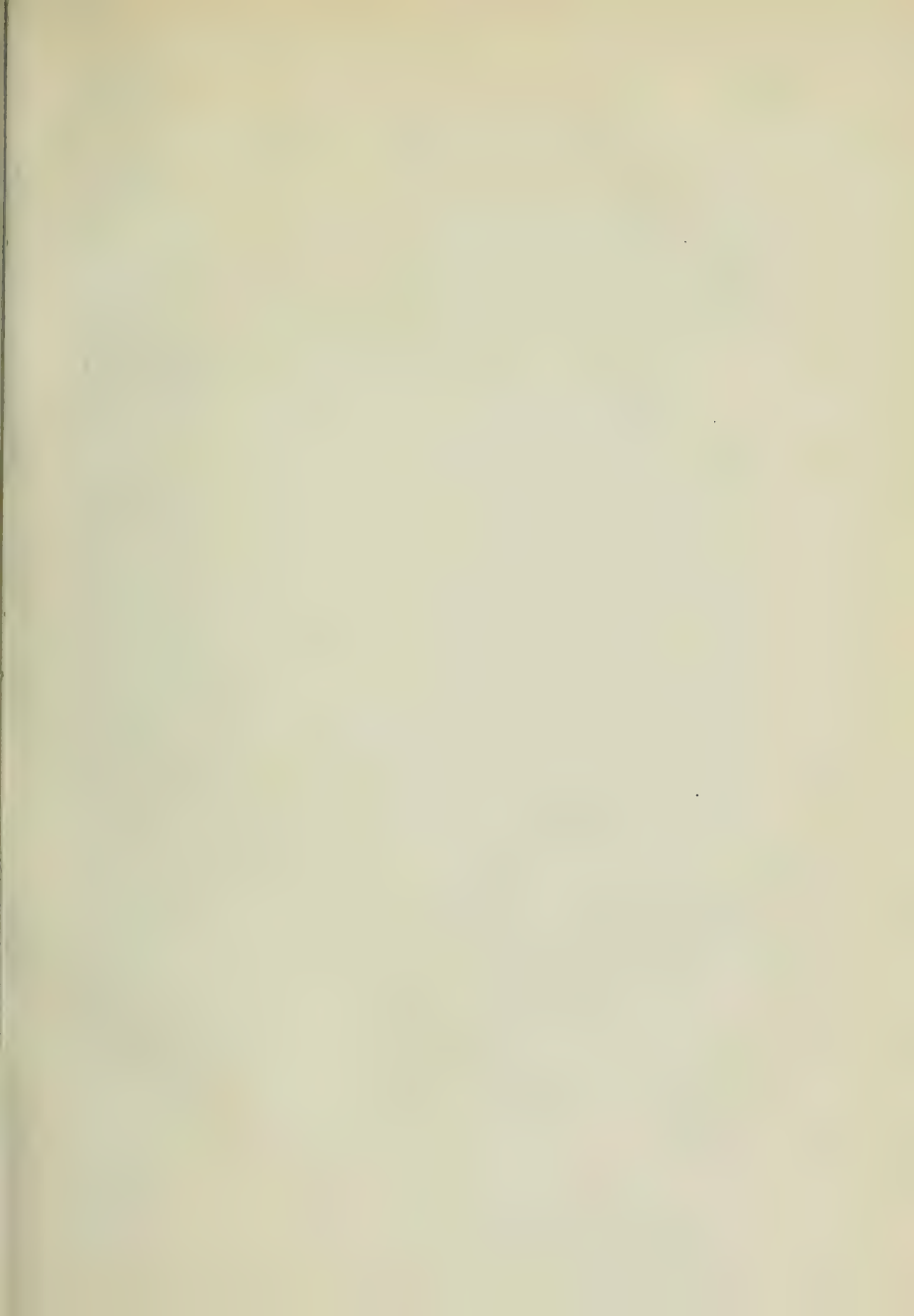
as already observed, had much more to do with the school-life of the time than even William Batt himself. In all the Reminiscences of all the old scholars of the period, his is the most conspicuous figure; and traditions of him still lingered for more than twenty years after he had left the Institution. Under his guidance the boys, some of them at any rate, undoubtedly made great advance, both as regarded school-work and the hardly less important pursuits of leisure-time. But there is also no doubt that the methods of government which then prevailed were not merely strict, but hard. Those were days, not only of Spartan fare, but of Draconian Laws and an iron discipline. There was, unhappily, a disposition on the part of the authorities to magnify small offences, and to treat trifling breaches of the regulations as if they had been serious crimes. And it is clear, from the Recollections of old scholars, that both the Superintendent and his first officer were conspicuous for a severity which some of their charges, in whose minds still rankled memories of injustice and tyranny, recalled with bitterness to the very end of their days.

“Barton Dell had a system,” writes one who knew him, “of putting boys ‘Subject to Punishment,’ as it was called; and these unfortunates he used to flog for the most trivial offences, generally with a leather strap, on the hand. I remember one boy who was thus branded during the whole of his school-life. As soon as he came back from the holidays, he was put ‘Subject to Punishment,’ and was not allowed to associate with the others. Even his physical exercise was taken while the rest were in School, and consisted in running round the shed at the top of the playground. And yet we never knew in what his wickedness consisted. Another boy, goaded to desperation by the tyranny to which he was subjected, rushed at Barton Dell with an open knife, with the full intention, as he afterwards declared, of killing him. Barton Dell warded the blow off with his hand, but was severely cut in the encounter. Calling the School

together, he held up his wounded hand, exclaiming, 'Look, boys, at your master's bloody hand!''"

It is only fair to add that even the stern rule of Barton Dell left different impressions on the minds of different scholars. And unpopular as he was in the School generally, he was not disliked by the industrious and well-conducted. "While the boys in general trembled at his presence, he had a few favourites, whom he treated with urbanity and kindness, and who were expected to keep up the reputation of the School by their own influence, which, in some cases, was greater than that of the teachers themselves. And with all his severity, there were times, especially in his Scripture lessons to the whole School, when he was extremely impressive, boys being often melted to tears by his appeals to their hearts." The writer has been assured by an old scholar who went to Sidcot several years after Barton Dell had left it, who knew him only by reputation, and who did not see him until he himself had grown to man's estate, that the unexpected prospect of meeting, in the flesh, the formidable pedagogue of whom he had heard such grim traditions, actually made him tremble from head to foot. "To my surprise, however," continued the narrator, "I found myself talking to a quiet-spoken, genial gentleman."

There was need, no doubt, for a considerable tightening of the reins. Owing in part, perhaps, to the small number and to the inexperience of the Staff, and to the frequent changes that had occurred in it, discipline seems to have sunk to a low ebb. There are hints of this in the School records, and there is much more about it in the Reminiscences of those who were scholars at the time. Affairs must have been in a pretty bad state in 1821, when, just after William Batt's accession, Joseph Storrs Fry was deputed by the Committee to order those "3 boxes of proper dimensions for the solitary confinement of refractory boys," which were so well-remembered in after years, perhaps more especially by those who had been locked up in them "to reflect,"—as the







ONE OF THE "COFFINS"

authorities put it. In the cash-book, by the way, they are entered as "Improvements," and they cost altogether £6, 18s. One of these boxes, or "coffins," as they were called, is still in existence; and although, for nearly three generations, it has served the harmless necessary purpose of a storage-place for house-maids' brooms, traditions still survive, among Shipham women who work at the School, and who heard the story from their mothers, of the use to which it was put, in what have been spoken of as the Dark Ages.

This relic of barbarism is a stoutly-made, upright box, measuring, inside, five feet six inches in height, twenty inches across, and twenty-one inches from back to front. On the inside of the door may be traced the initials A. H., A. G. M., and G. M., the latter repeated. There were, as already noted, three of these "coffins," and they were all kept upstairs, standing near the teachers' beds.

"I have reason," wrote an old scholar whose experiences dated from the early twenties, "to recollect the 'coffins'; a very correct name for them, only that they were perpendicular; just room enough to stand in, no seat, dark. I suppose there must have been ventilation, but I cannot remember any; fastened by a common door. Diet, bread and water; confined for days. In common use for, I think, one or two years. A punishment by refined cruelty, far worse than the open thrashing which was often inflicted. When a boy was punished, I don't think he was ever asked if he was guilty or had any excuse to make. . . . No doubt you will say," continued the writer of this letter, "that there must have been a bright side to the question. If there was, it is so obscured by the dark side that it has passed out of all recollection."

The usual punishment, as suggested above, was flogging; and it is evident that the strap and the cane were employed for very slight offences. One old scholar remembered for the rest of his life that, for having pushed a boy in front of

him, as they were marching into the dining-room, he was told, in all seriousness, that he deserved to be flogged. The same authority mentions in his *Reminiscences* the case of a boy who was "repeatedly caned 30 or 40 cuts on the palm of the hand. He was looked upon as a hero for bearing it without flinching, whilst the master seemed determined to go on caning until the boy broke down. But," concluded the writer, "I do not remember that he ever did."

Between the years 1825 and 1832 an attempt was made to manage with less punishment. The Committee unanimously accepted a plan laid before them by William Batt, proposing "a system of rewards to the children, for the purpose of stimulating them to proper exertion and good conduct, and preventing in great measure the necessity of positive punishment"; and they agreed to spend five pounds a year on prizes in the Boys' School. There is no definite allusion, in the Minutes, to the girls; but later entries show that they shared in the prize-giving. Among prize-books of the period may be mentioned Cook's "*Voyages*," Young's "*Night Thoughts*," Thompson's "*Seasons*," Bacon's "*Essays*," White's "*Selborne*," and Johnson's "*Dictionary*." Younger boys were rewarded with knives, and "various useful articles," not particularly specified. This Prize System was discontinued in 1832, when it was decided to spend the money on books and apparatus for "the instruction and amusement of the scholars."

It was under this scheme that the boys were classified, according to their behaviour. Every boy, on entering school, was placed in the division called "Blank," that is to say, zero or starting-point. Sustained good conduct secured gradual promotion to higher ranks, known as "Thirds," "Seconds," and "Veterans." The Veterans were those who "were supposed to have fought their way through temptation, and were considered trustworthy."

The plan did not answer. Mere breaches of school-order were treated as severely as if they had been grave moral offences.

There were high-spirited boys who never rose above "Blank" during the whole time they were at school; boys with a strong sense of the ludicrous, and who were thus not able at all times to keep back their laughter; boys who whistled;—"Whistling," said William Batt to a culprit caught in the act, "whistling is the next door to swearing"; boys who talked at meals or other improper times; these were criminals, probably on the "Black List," and with no hope of promotion. One old scholar has declared that, although a "Veteran" most of the time he was at Sidcot, he was degraded for three weeks for once speaking to his neighbour in school-hours. If he was caught,—as perhaps he was, who knows?—what humiliation would have been thought adequate in the case of the young rhymer who has left us one of the very few touches of personal description of the Head-master of the time—

"Billy, Billy Batt,  
With the three-cocked hat"?

It was in October 1825, during the period when the authorities were trying to control the boys with little or no corporal punishment, that the Superintendent reported to the Committee that he had felt obliged to send home a boy who, having only entered the School in the previous August, had been very insubordinate, and had "repeatedly absconded." An entry in the cash-book of the time records that the runaway's "repeated elopements" had cost the establishment £1, 14s. 8d.—in chasing him and fetching him back, no doubt. The Committee considered the action of the Head-master irregular, but, under the circumstances, they endorsed it, and the culprit was formally expelled. Poor little chap! He was only ten years old. It was surely a very unsatisfactory system which was baffled by so youthful an offender.

But it would be wrong to assume that these Dark Ages of the School's History were relieved by no gleams of light. There certainly was another side to the picture. Some of the

Reminiscences of old scholars clearly show that although life at Sidcot was rough, seventy or eighty years since, it was by no means devoid of happiness. Boys who wished to learn, and who were not in the Black Books of the authorities, had, after all, not much to complain of. In a Paper read at the Jubilee Meeting of the Boys' Literary Society, in 1873, by Robert Harding, a scholar from 1828 to 1832, are some happy touches descriptive of school-days that had no great hardship in them. The writer thus concludes:—

“ But time and patience forbid entering into all the deeply-interesting incidents of my four important years at Sidcot. The General Meetings, with examinations, hopes and fears; the kindly visitors; Joseph John Gurney, with his anecdotes and ‘ six rules to be remembered ’; the delightful break-ups for vacations, with the chaises rattling down to take us off—south, north, east, and west; the chilblain-rubbings by the dining-room fire; the stone floor, and no shoes nor slippers to walk to bed in; the potato-digging in 10th month—dressed in little smock-frocks—old Robert Ellis calling out to the idlers his ‘ Goor on, all in rautation ’; the after bonfire, with the timber and whatever we could collect, and the stray potatoes roasted black as a coal, but none the worse for that; the potato-flour making—boys grating them into water—our milk thickened with it, and eaten of a frosty morning with such a gusto when indigestion was unknown; the cold rice-puddings on summer First-days, especially if a milky slice, or a corner-cut of baked suet on Fourth-days; the happy deaf and dumb servant, who loved to have a chat on her fingers with those she thought did not tease her; the many and indissoluble friendships, formed, some never to be renewed; the tall boy, now an M.P., who would run from any part of the play-ground at the cry of distress from the little one under his care, just come to school; the slender, loving lad, a close friend, now under Catholic vows as Father F——. With a few shades to these pleasant pictures, in those who have proved that the way of transgressors is hard.”



At the Girls' School affairs seem to have run more smoothly, with less of friction and with less of change. There was, it is true, some difficulty in finding a suitable successor to Edith Frank. In December 1822 Mary Russell came for a few weeks "on trial," after the custom of the time; and, as she was favourably reported on to the Committee, she was definitely engaged, in January 1823, at a salary of thirty-five guineas per annum. She was married, and, with her invalid husband, she lived out of the house. She was expected to be at the School by seven o'clock in the morning—eight o'clock in the "four winter months"—and "to continue with the children till they are retired to rest." Poor Mrs Russell! Poor Mr Russell!! The arrangement did not last long. The new Governess received notice before the year was out. Her successor, Anna Wheeler, stayed seven years; and when she left, in 1831, the Committee expressed in warm terms their high appreciation of her services. The next Governess was Sarah Batt, the Superintendent's daughter, who taught with great success until the winter of 1834, when she married Barton Dell. It is interesting to note that, in the autumn of 1838, Maria Ferris, so long connected with Southside School in Weston-super-Mare, took "the place of a girls' teacher absent through ill-health."

Early in 1822, women Friends having suggested that it was "advisable there should be an older person at the Girls' House, besides the Governess and the Apprentice," in view, no doubt, of the irregular although romantic episode of the previous autumn, the Committee engaged a matron, or, as she was then styled, a domestic assistant. She did not, however, stay long; and when her successor left, in the same year, no one could be found to fill the vacant place until the following July. In the spring of 1824 Jane Pitman came to the School as matron. She held the post for eleven years; and then, on the sudden death of Mary Batt, in 1835, she was appointed general housekeeper for both schools, and

only left when William Batt retired in 1839: "a dear, kind Friend, universally beloved by the boys."

Another serious difficulty that confronted William Batt was the question of finance; the "eternal want of pence" that has vexed the souls of the authorities in almost all stages of the School's History. The continued fall in the amount of the annual subscriptions, accompanied, as it was, by a rise in the price of many articles of consumption, had brought the Institution into debt. In April 1826 the General Meeting called the attention of the Committee to the fact that the year's expenditure had exceeded the income by £276, and that there was, moreover, a balance due to the treasurer of more than twice that sum. It was suggested, first, that a special subscription should be asked for; and, secondly, that the household expenses should be cut down. The General Meeting thought that meat might be more cheaply purchased. They suggested that less bread should be used, and more potatoes. They ruled that repairs and improvements should, as far as possible, be discontinued; that less paid labour should be employed, and that the boys should do more work on the land. Finally, they urged on the managing authorities the pressing need for retrenchment. In the following July, the Committee, having these instructions in view, "gave the Master such hints and advice as they deemed expedient, and particularly impressed upon him the absolute necessity of strict economy in every department of the Institution."

The Superintendent followed these directions well—so well, indeed, that the impression left on the mind of one of his scholars was that "Batt's main idea seemed to be to cut down expenses in every direction." The credit of the School was restored, but it was largely by methods which do not commend themselves to modern ideas. In the first place, the special subscription realised rather more than seven hundred pounds; but, in the second place, the children got a great deal less to eat. The Report of the General

Meeting of 1827, after a year of "strict economy," shows that, although there was one more scholar than in the previous year, the consumption of meat was more than a thousand pounds less in weight, while the cost had fallen from £217 to £143. The quality of the food supplied to the children was, to judge from the recollections of some of them, even poorer than it had been under Lydia Gregory. The Bullock's Hearts, Calf's Henges, Tripe and Black Puddings, which had sometimes been seen on the tables when that lady ruled the household, appeared more frequently in the days of William Batt, especially in 1826, and the years immediately following.

Nothing is said in the School Records about the effect of this parsimony upon the health of the children; but it is remembered that a Gloucestershire Friend, at one time a Committee-man himself, once went so far as to declare, in public, that in the burial-grounds of the district might be found "the graves of various young persons whose lives had been prematurely shortened by neglect and insufficient nourishment while at Sidcot School."

It is a most serious indictment, impossible, at this distance of time, to challenge. But it is only fair to the Head-master to remember that he was carrying out the express injunctions of the Committee, who, indeed, warmly approved of his retrenchments. In the same way, the proverbial frugality that marked the reign of Lydia Gregory was probably not initiated by her. That, too, was the work of the Committee. Their part in the business is forgotten, while the names of their ministers have ever since been associated with a niggardly house-keeping, and a policy of ruthless cheese-paring. Nor should all the blame rest on the Committee. What they did was by direction of the General Meeting. They were only trying to cut the coat according to the cloth. The root of the trouble lay in the fact that Friends who had undertaken to support the Institution failed to keep their word. The School was short of money, and the authorities,

having no endowment of any consequence to fall back upon, could only make ends meet by keeping down the cost of living.

For the greater part of William Batt's government the methods of Education were much the same as they had been during the previous period. The curriculum still included only English subjects;—Reading, Writing, Grammar, Geography, and Arithmetic as far as Vulgar and Decimal Fractions. A great deal of time was spent on Geography and English Grammar, in both of which Barton Dell was specially interested, and manuals of which he compiled for the use of the School. He laid such stress on the importance of Grammar that any boy who, even in play-hours, and in the excitement of a game, was heard to break one of Lindley Murray's Rules, had a log of wood chained to his leg until he could catch one of his comrades tripping in a similar manner, when the log was transferred to the more recent offender. Much attention was also paid to composition, and the boys were frequently set to write accounts of lectures, or excursions, or of other episodes of school-life. In their limited range of subjects the children were thoroughly drilled; and, as an old scholar of the time has assured us, "What was professedly taught was well taught." Another speaks of the Education of his day, from 1830 to 1834, as "sound and good." The hand-writing was of the highest excellence. Specimens have been preserved which could hardly be surpassed. There were, of course, years when the verdicts of the examining Committees at the General Meeting were not wholly favourable. A scholar of the early days of William Batt remembered a public examination when no boy in the first class could tell in what county Liverpool was.

Little or no History was taught during this period, nor was any attention paid to the study of the English Classics. Those were days when it was thought by Friends generally that "Shakespeare was of the Wicked One." It is perhaps



hardly necessary to add that neither music nor singing was tolerated, much less taught. William Batt's opinion of whistling has already been quoted. Barton Dell, however, had a taste for music. It is still remembered that he had "a monstrous Jews'-Harp," and that "he played it well, having a very correct ear." Such, however, was the spirit of the time, that even the boys regarded this as "going rather far!" Barton Dell, moreover, when taking the boys for a walk, sounded the "Assembly" on a small bugle, instead of with the more familiar whistle.

But although the authorised curriculum was thus restricted, lessons in more advanced subjects were given, in play-time, to a privileged few. Thus, about the year 1825, three boys were taught Latin in their leisure time; "very little Latin," as one of the three assured the writer. Five others, between the years 1828 and 1832, received some instruction in French; having previously "as a test of perseverance," learnt pages of the driest parts of Murray's "Grammar." These voluntary scholars were allowed to get up at four o'clock in the morning, and to light the school-room fire. One day, however, a boy having been called upon to translate "*Faites-moi cette grâce,*" rendered it, "*Fat 'oss ate grass*"—a piece of impertinence which so provoked the instructor that the class was dismissed, and the privilege was lost for ever. In 1830 there was an out-of-school drawing class; and a scholar of the time still remembers how he regarded their productions as prodigies of skill.

Some attempts were made, too, by means of experimental lessons, also given in leisure-time, to rouse interest in electricity, chemistry, and acoustics. The air-pump, with which many Sidcot scholars have been made more or less familiar, either by simply seeing it through the glass doors of the old instrument-cupboard that stood so long in the committee-room, or by being so fortunate as to witness or even to try experiments with it, was bought in the year of Queen Victoria's Accession, and cost, with some of its



accessories, about nine guineas. It was second-hand then, but it is still sound and serviceable.

In the titles of books which were added to the library, or which were given away as prizes, we have clear evidence that the standard of Education was rising. Many Friends' books were bought for the School; but with them were the "Principles of Teaching," "Library of Useful Knowledge," "Watts on the Mind," "Logic," Rollin's "Ancient History," White's "Selborne," "Journey to the Hebrides," and the "Penny Cyclopædia."

The school-books in ordinary use seem to have been much the same as before. The Ackworth "Vocabulary," first printed in 1801, appears to have been introduced into Sidcot in 1822, and the almost equally familiar Table-Book two years later. Several old scholars of the time speak of a custom which prevailed under William Batt, by which the boys, while at collect, and on their way into school or meals, used to repeat, in chorus, extracts from Barton Dell's "Geography" and "Grammar," and other miscellaneous scraps of knowledge. Such energy was put into these repetitions that the names of rivers and mountains, the rules of grammar, and even the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, could, it is said, be distinctly heard in Woodborough.

"I remember," writes an old scholar of the time, "one favourite recitation was a paragraph beginning with the words 'The most famous canals in England are, &c.' I have all my life been grateful to Barton Dell for thus impressing on me the chief geographical names throughout the world, and to this day I can repeat some portions of the Summary thus prepared."

Some change in the character of the Religious Instruction was made in 1825, when Friends, perhaps beginning to feel that John Bevans's much-used Manual was, after all, rather narrow in its aims, and that it savoured of the stern creed of the Covenantanter more than of the loving counsel of the Evangelists, expressed a wish to have less Catechism and

more Scripture. It was well, they thought, that the children should be familiarised with passages dwelling on the Love and Mercy of God, as well as on his Power and Wisdom and Justice. And further, with a view to elucidate the Doctrine and Practice of the Society, more Friends' books were bought; among them being the admirable and ever-fresh John Woolman's "Journal." In 1829 it was proposed to discontinue the public repetition of the Catechism; and in 1835 the use of the book was abandoned altogether.

The Sunday-evening reading was held in "the large room" of the Girls' House, where the Master and Mistress, and one boy and one girl, read in turn various passages of Scripture. Friends from the neighbourhood, or who were travelling in the ministry, were often present at these gatherings, and frequently delivered addresses to the children. After 1838, when the schools were united under one roof, this Sunday-evening assembly took place in the girls' school-room, now the reading-room. Except on such occasions and at meeting, boys and girls never met. "Oh, dear, no!" said one who was a scholar in the early twenties; "that would have been poison, or worse than poison!" Brothers and sisters were only allowed to meet on Saturday afternoons, when, under the strict surveillance of a teacher, they walked up and down the Long Garden, for half an hour, or more, "according to the kindness of the teacher in charge."

Books were dear in those days, chiefly, perhaps, because of the high price of paper. Some of the paper used in the school in William Batt's time cost twenty shillings a ream. Blotting-paper, first mentioned in 1825, actually cost the Institution five shillings a quire, or no less than five pounds a ream. Steel pens, which came into fairly general use in the country about 1830, were first bought by the School in 1834, when three dozen cost four shillings, or more than a penny farthing each. Better pens can now be purchased at a halfpenny the dozen. Quills were in use for the greater

part of the period, and were sometimes bought from itinerant pedlars. In the cash-book for 1833 is this entry:—

“Bot. of a Jew at the door, 600 quills and 4 doz. lead pencils, £1, 2s.”

It is of great interest to note that a Conference of Teachers was held at Ackworth, in August 1837, and that Barton Dell attended it, as a delegate from Sidcot, the cost of his journey, £7, 9s. 6d., being defrayed by the Institution. Unfortunately, there appears to be no further record of this gathering, either in the Sidcot Minute-book or in the “History of Ackworth School.”

Barton Dell, who was a man of many parts, and who is described, by one who knew him well, as “most ingenious and mechanical,” encouraged, and probably originated, various kinds of leisure-time employments besides the classes in Latin and French and drawing. He set up a printing-press, from which, on the 27th of February 1832, was issued a diminutive newspaper, called *The Juvenile Miscellany*, the official organ of the association bearing the portentous name of “The Juvenile Society for Mutual Improvement in Useful Knowledge.” Barton Dell himself wrote “the exciting leading articles, whilst the boys furnished other contributions.” Another periodical issued by the Sidcot Press was *The Sidcot Teetotaller*, of which some numbers are still in existence. William Palmer used to relate how, when the *Great Western* steamship started on her maiden voyage from Bristol to America, on the 8th of April 1838, he was posted, with a telescope, at one of the dining-room windows,—the boys being in temporary possession of the west wing of the house, during the building of the new premises,—with orders to call Barton Dell, as soon as the vessel came in sight. He did so, and was thus the first inmate of the School to see a steamer start for America.\*



Thy friend truly  
Boston Dill





It was Barton Dell, again, who in 1830 designed and superintended the building of the Fives Tower, now demolished, but familiar to generations of Sidcot scholars. Fives was a popular game of the period, and was played with the hand or with a wooden racquet. Other games of William Batt's day were "Chevy Chase," "Hop Across," "King of the Castle," "Foot and Horse-Shoe," and "Leap-Frog." "These," says a scholar of the time, "were nearly all rough games; but they were encouraged by Friends and teachers, on the ground that they were supposed to make boys muscular and manly." Cricket and football were almost, although not entirely, unknown.

"The Juvenile Society for Mutual Improvement in Useful Knowledge," to which reference has already been made, the fore-runner of the Literary and other societies which play so important a part in the school-life of to-day, was founded on the 5th of November 1823. At its Meetings, which were held every Friday, essays were read—few in number, apparently—and from twenty to forty previously-prepared questions were proposed, chiefly on scientific or historical subjects. These questions, which seem to have been discussed at the time, formed the bulk of the business. But, beyond the statement of their number, with a note saying whether they had all been answered or not, there is nothing about them in the Minutes. Under Rule II. it was decided that the meetings should "be open to other communications from the members, provided that the general object of the formation of the Society be kept in view." Rule XVII. further provided "that the members be at liberty to bring forward occasionally such extracts, either in prose or Poetry, as may in their opinion be examples worthy of notice, for elegance of style, or correctness of sentiment."

Applications for admission to the Society were made in writing, and a good many of them have been preserved. The following are the applications of the only two Sidcot boys who have become Members of Parliament:—

*" 10th mo. 4th. 1824.*

" To the members of the Juvenile Society.

" I send this to inform you that I wish to be admitted into the Juvenile Society, and should be glad if you would admit me, knowing that it would be for my improvement.

" CHARLES GILPIN."

The second bears no date, but it was read at a Meeting held December 6th, 1828 :—

" To the Juvenile Society.

" As I wish to improve in my learning, I should be very much obliged to you, if you would admit me as a member in your Society.

GEORGE PALMER."

Soon after the date of this second application, interest in the work of the Association showed signs of flagging ; nor is this, perhaps, greatly to be wondered at, when we read the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 28th and 29th of January 1829. The solitary essay then read bore the portentous title of " The Inducements to a Religious Life, and the Necessity of Preparing for Death " ; and the last Minute runs :

" 7. This Meeting has been engaged in asking questions."

After this date no meetings appear to have been held. No new members were admitted ; and in August 1831 only George Palmer remained. An attempt was then made to establish a new Society, with the same name as before, but with somewhat different aims. Essays and questions did not, it was thought, provide sufficiently interesting material ; and it was " unanimously decided that the most desirable branch of study for immediate attention was natural philosophy." The members were therefore " desired to furnish themselves with information respecting the nature of atoms, attraction, repulsion and inertia." Composition, again, was declared to

be "a highly desirable exercise," and the members were therefore "encouraged to write essays."

The new Society seems to have been short-lived. Only three meetings were held. The next entry in the Minute-book is dated eleven years later, and records the formation of a third association, to be called the "Mutual Improvement Society," whose history belongs to the next period. The association which was founded in 1823 is the first of which anything definite is known. But there is preserved at the School a small manuscript-book, containing fourteen essays, all but two of which are in rhyme or blank verse, and all dated January or February 1821. The names of the authors are given, but no further information. The wording of the Minutes recording the foundation of a new Society, in 1831, suggests that that association had had more than one predecessor.

Charles Gilpin,—an older brother of Joseph Sturge Gilpin, a Sidcot teacher under Henry Dymond,—was the only Sidcot scholar who has been a member of the British Government. He was, moreover, Chairman of the National Provident Institution, and Director of the South-Eastern Railway, and he was for some years a member of the Common Council of London. His first attempt to enter Parliament—as candidate for Perth in 1852—was unsuccessful. It was probably during this election campaign that he gave great offence in high quarters by alluding to the funeral of the Duke of Wellington as "a triumph of upholstery." In 1857 he was elected (Liberal) Member for Northampton; and he was re-elected at the General Elections of 1859, 1865 and 1868.

In 1859, on the return of Palmerston to power, he was appointed Secretary to the Poor-Law Board, a post which he held for six years, resigning in 1865. John Bright's comment, when Charles Gilpin told him that he had taken office under Palmerston, was, "Thou'd better have put a rope round thy neck!"

The most prominent feature of Charles Gilpin's career was

his strenuous advocacy of the Abolition of Capital Punishment, about which there was in those days much more agitation than there is now.

He was a close personal friend of the Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth, who, in "Memories of my Exile," speaks of him in the warmest terms. "I never knew," he writes, in describing events of the year 1859, "a man, not himself an exile, who could so thoroughly feel what sufferings and what claims on Christian sympathy the words 'without a country' contain. I never knew a man who carried out more consistently that sublime command of Our Saviour, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'; and this man bestowed a friendship upon me such as is seldom met with in this world. . . . A sincerer man, a man of truer heart, there could not be. Blessed be his memory!"

Not only was Charles Gilpin deeply interested in the condition of the down-trodden people of Hungary, then, as it seemed, on the eve of revolution; but, both while a private member of the House and after he joined Lord Palmerston's Ministry, he laboured hard to secure the promise of England's neutrality in the event of an insurrection breaking out in that country, as Kossuth and his compatriots hoped and believed it would break out, so that Austria would not be able to reckon on the intervention and assistance of Great Britain. His efforts were successful. The assurance was given. And although the Hungarian insurrection came to nothing, and the Army of Independence had to be disbanded, Kossuth afterwards said of Charles Gilpin that the people of Hungary never could repay the debt they owed him.

It is remarkable that the only other old Sidcot boy who became a member of Parliament was also connected with this period. The name of George Palmer, as one of the founders of the world-famous Reading firm of biscuit-makers, is without doubt more widely known than that of any other Old Sidcot Scholar. After leaving the School in 1832, he served his time as apprentice to a miller and baker in Taunton; and



in 1841 he joined Thomas Huntley, who had established himself as a confectioner in Reading, some fifteen years before. The new partner was not only master of his craft: he was a born engineer; and it was through him that machinery was introduced into the then insignificant little business, thus laying the foundation of a vast commercial industry which now finds employment for seven thousand operatives, whose works cover more than twenty-four acres of ground, and which, for the quantity and quality of its productions, has no rival in the world.

Ten years only had passed before, at the Exhibition of 1851, the biscuits of Huntley & Palmer gained a Bronze Medal—the greatest distinction that had, so far, been conferred upon the trade. In the half-century which has intervened, the wares of Huntley & Palmers—Samuel and William Palmer early joined their brother in the firm—have won the highest honours at every exhibition at which they have been shown; and to-day their name is a household word in every corner of every continent.

George Palmer's success as a business man, his shrewdness, and his straightforward and honourable character, brought him more than mere money, although, at the time of his death, in 1897, he was a very wealthy man. In 1857 he was made Mayor of Reading. From 1878 to 1885 he was Liberal Member for the Borough—resigning his seat in favour of the Right Hon. G. Shaw Lefevre when the Redistribution Bill deprived the town of one of its Representatives. And in 1891, on the day of the opening of Palmer Park, one of his many gifts to the town of his adoption, a statue of him was erected in his honour—a distinction in which he, as a scholar of the Friends' Public School at Sidcot, is believed to stand alone. It is true that Joseph Sturge, of whom there is a statue at the Five Ways, at Birmingham, was also a Sidcot scholar; but that was in John Benwell's time, before the property passed into the hands of Friends.

Throughout the whole of this period the boys, according to the original Rules and Regulations, were employed to



some extent on the farm and in the garden, especially in weeding, in setting and digging potatoes, and in hoeing and pulling turnips. Churning butter was, of course, an indoor occupation. One of the least popular employments was "Potato-washing," which, to quote from the *Reminiscences* of a scholar of the early thirties, "frequently involved a thorough wetting; and as it was performed between six and seven in the morning, both summer and winter, and out-of-doors, it was a test of endurance of no mean order." When the boys worked in this way on holiday afternoons they were paid for their labour. In the cash-book for 1827 occurs this note:—

"Pd. Boys labor, at half holidays (voluntary) 1/4."

The crops in the Long Garden, especially the apples and potatoes, appear to have suffered a good deal from thieves: and "watching the grounds to protect them from depredators" was a serious item in the accounts. In 1835 the authorities paid a man to act as policeman. But whether the following entry refers merely to the protection of School property, or to a possible duty of land-holders to provide a man to keep order in the parish generally, is not altogether clear:—

"Jno. Caple, serving the office of Constable for the Estate, £5. 0. 0."

Another sort of "depredation," and one that was continued for many years, was the periodic seizure of goods, in consequence of the refusal of Friends to pay Tithes. The officer seems often to have taken more than was due. Pigs were frequently seized for the Vicar's benefit, and such entries as the following are not infrequent:—

"Overplus from seizure of pigs for Tithe . . . £1. 5. 6."

In William Batt's time the School acquired several more pieces of property. The first in point of time was the meadow known as Pattenham or Paddingham, which was bought in 1822 for £270. For many years it was, although

much too narrow for the purpose used by the boys as a cricket-field, in turn with Five Acres, which was broad enough, but inconveniently hilly. There was once an apple-orchard at the western end of Pattenham, but this was rooted up in 1831, on the ground that it "has produced little if any fruit for many years, and that the land is injured by the shade of the trees."

In 1829 the Bridgwater property was augmented by the purchase, for £400, of a cottage and the adjoining piece of ground. In 1833 the School bought, for about £1000, sixteen acres of land near Bridgwater, known as the Mouzney Estate. In the following year a similar property was acquired near Pawlett; but this was re-sold in 1838, at a profit of £100. In 1835 the thatched house which stood nearly on the site of the present Rose Cottage was bought from Charles Strode's widow for £250, a sum which the Committee "were quite aware was considerably more than its real value, but they regarded the possession of it as essential." In the same year Thomas and Fanny Clark presented to the School twenty-four acres of land near Glastonbury, known as the Havyatt Estate, and valued at £1000.

In 1826, when the Institution was in financial difficulties, it was proposed that some of the land at Bridgwater should be sold or let for building. Nothing was done at the time; but in 1829 the plan took definite shape. Beginning with the Conygre Field, plots 40 feet wide and 224 feet deep were offered to purchasers, at £3, 10s. per annum, on a lease of three hundred and fifty years; and in the same year the first of these plots was taken by a man named Squibbs. Many more building sites were sold by the School in the years immediately following. In 1836 the Bristol and Exeter Railway Company, now merged in the Great Western, applied for leave to carry their line through the Bridgwater Estate; and in 1838 they bought four and a half acres of the land on which to build a station, for which they paid £200

in cash, agreeing at the same time to make a road through to the rest of the School property. The sale, on ground rents, of these plots of land has proved of very great advantage to the Institution. The Bridgwater property, which, in 1818, was valued at £3607, 6s., and produced an annual rental of £81, 13s. 4d., is now worth £12,150, and brings in a net return of about £600 a year.

In 1827 Dr Robert Pope, of Staines, offered the sum of £2000 to the School, on condition of receiving an annuity of £100 a year "during the lives of himself, of his wife Margaret Pope, and of his daughter Margaret Pope, and of the survivor and survivors of them." The offer was accepted and the money was sunk in twenty £100 shares in the Grand Surrey Canal. The School paid the annuity for forty years; but the Canal Bonds turned out a rather unfortunate investment. In 1830 the Company lowered their rate of interest from 5 per cent. to 4 per cent., allowing, however, two separate bonuses of £20 by way of solatium. The diminished revenue of £80 was further reduced by taxation to about £77. The shares were finally sold in 1852, for £1800.

The decision of the General Meeting of 1826, that, in order to help in restoring the credit of the Institution, repairs should be avoided as far as possible, had a bad effect upon the condition of the buildings. And when, in 1834, the Committee called in a surveyor to examine into the state of the premises, he reported that the greater part of them, and especially those connected with the Boys' School, were in a state of decay. He was further of opinion that, to put them in good order, would be a very expensive undertaking; and that, even if this were done, they would still be incomplete and unsubstantial.

In consequence of this sweeping condemnation, the Committee, making up their minds that the schools would have to be rebuilt before the lapse of many years, proposed to set aside for the purpose what money they could, from subscriptions and legacies, and at the same time to appeal to



*Plan of*  
**The Sidcot Estate**  
 IN THE PARISH OF  
**WINSCOMBE**  
*in the County of*  
**Somerset.**  
1848



**REFERENCE**

NO	PREMISES	QUANTITY
1	Freehold Schoolhouse, Playground and Offices	6.2.1
2	Arable field formerly in two closes called Cherry Orchard and Greenhill	6.2.1
3	Kitchen and Flower-Gardens	1.1.1
4	Stable Coachhouse outbuildings	1.1.1
5	Dwelling house and Gas Works	1.1.1
6	Garden near Meeting house	1.1.1
7	Arable field called North field	1.1.1

J. H. COTTERELL  
 Surveyor

BATH 1848

and Y. J. P. STURGE 1826



Friends, especially Friends of the West of England, for contributions.

In 1835 the General Meeting considered a plan for building, on the site of the Boys' House, a new School, to accommodate from eighty-five to one hundred boys and girls. A Committee was appointed—first, to consider whether Sidcot was, after all, the best place or not, and secondly, to collect funds. The Meeting further ruled that the work might begin as soon as the building committee had £1500 in hand, a sum which it was then thought would represent about half the total cost.

It was soon settled that there could be no better site for the School than Sidcot; and plans were at once called for. Of these there were two—one by George Dymond, the architect who had examined and condemned the existing buildings, and the other, which was adopted, by S. W. Dawkes. The total outlay was expected to reach £4454, 14s. 7d., exclusive of a hot-air apparatus for the school-rooms, dining-rooms, and teachers' studies. By 1836 £1779, 7s. had been subscribed, of which £921, 3s. came from the Quarterly Meeting of Bristol and Somerset. Devonshire's first contribution amounted to £3, 10s.; but, having been gently remonstrated with, the county furnished an additional sum of £3, 11s. 6d.

Work began at once, and the foundations were laid in 1836. The plan was to build the centre and the girls' wing first. The boys were then to occupy the west end of the house while the old School, the School of William Jenkins and John Benwell, was pulled down, and the eastern wing of the new building erected. Stone was obtained from a quarry which was opened for the purpose in the Cherry Orchard,—the field to the north-west, now adjoining the girls' playground,—and which was filled up with rubbish in 1839.

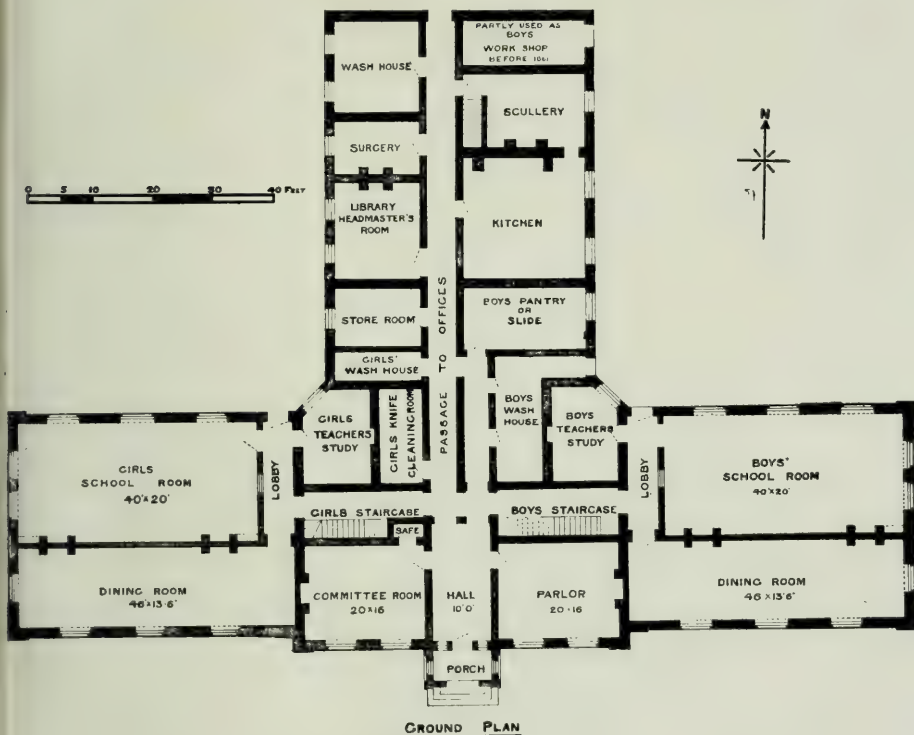
The work of building was rapidly accomplished. At the General Meeting of 1837 it was reported that the centre and the west wing would be habitable after the approaching

vacation, which commenced that year on the 8th of June, or two weeks earlier than usual, no doubt with the idea of getting the boys well out of the way. It was also reported, however, that the funds were still about £3000 short of what was required. A year later it was announced that the entire building was finished, and that after the summer vacation it would be occupied by the "united Family," consisting of forty-seven boys and thirty-six girls, together with the Superintendent and housekeeper, the matron, three boys' teachers, three girls' teachers and three servants, making a total of ninety-five. The cost of the new building was £5487, 18s. 5d., of which only £2135, 2s. 8d. was covered by subscriptions and legacies. The balance was made up by loans; and the Committee were authorised to sell some of the School land, if necessary, in order to raise further funds.

The School building that was completed in 1838 has been so modified in the seventy years that have intervened that it is not easy now to trace the original edifice. It was shaped like a perfectly plain block capital letter T with no protuberances or excrescences whatever. When the writer first went to Sidcot, in the summer of 1862, only two additions had been made to the main building. These were the girls' play-room, long since demolished, and the boys' first class-room, part of which is now the masters' common-room. The boys' offices had been moved from near the top of the western side of the playground, and had been placed between the class-room and the road. The playing-shed had also been moved from the top of the playground to the site of the present fourth form-room and the art-room. To the north of the shed had been built the boys'-room, the work-shop, and the dark-room for photography. There were originally two school-rooms, one on each side of the house, facing north, so that the sun rarely shone into them. The two dining-rooms faced south, and overlooked the terrace. The boys' teachers' study, separated from the school-room by a passage, which

# SIDCOT SCHOOL SOMERSETSHIRE

## GROUND PLAN OF SCHOOL IN 1838



GROUND PLAN

*Drawn by A. P. I. Cotterell, M.Inst. C.E.*



has disappeared, and looking out on the playground, now forms the north-western corner of the dining-hall. The girls' teachers' study, similarly situated on the other side of the house, now forms part of the secretary's room. The whole of the ground-floor rooms used by the children were originally paved with stone; and a curious regulation, made in 1837, provided that "for the present year," that is to say, while the flag-stones of the floors were still comparatively new, the boys were to have no nails in their shoes.

In 1838 it was reported that the heating apparatus was not successful. The contractor, however, maintained that it had not had a fair trial, owing to the dampness of the walls. It had not been paid for, and the contractor was bound to remove it, free of charge, in case it failed. It never did really answer, but the contractor was paid, as the account books show.

The new arrangements left much to be desired. There were two shower-baths on the top floor, but there was no bath-room in the ordinary sense of the word, and no swimming-bath. Nor was there yet a proper supply of water, either for washing or drinking. There was a cistern at the top of the house, but it was filled by pumping up to it the water brought, as before, from Hale Well. The sum of five shillings was still, to the end of this period, paid for a right-of-way to Hale across the fields. A pump and leather hose were carried on the water-cart; and for a time there was a pump at Hale Well itself. The plans that were drawn for the new building contemplated a subterranean engine-house over the old and disused well, but that part of the scheme was not carried out.

Boys still went, although very rarely, to bathe in the River Axe, at a point some three or four miles from the School. From 1821 to 1824, whatever may have been the case later, only one boy, James Clark of Street, could swim, and he was naturally regarded as a hero.



Great damage was done to the new building by violent storms, late in 1838 and early in 1839. The former of these, apparently the historic storm in which the *Forfarshire* was wrecked on the Farne Islands, when Grace Darling and her father so nobly distinguished themselves, broke many windows and skylights, and greatly injured the roof. The storm of January 1839, which was very severe indeed all over the West of England and in Ireland, tore off £30 worth of lead from the school roof, and carried away hundreds of slates.

The management of the new School was in the hands of William Batt and Jane Pitman. The latter, on the sudden death of Mary Batt, in 1835, had been made general house-keeper, with charge of both houses, at a salary of £35 per annum. William Batt's remuneration was at the same time reduced; and for the rest of his tenure of office he received, as Superintendent, no more than £45 a year.

Towards the close of 1837 the Committee informed William Batt that it was thought better, now that the family was "about to be collected in one building," that a Friend and his wife should have charge of the Institution. He fully agreed with the suggestion, acknowledging, at the same time, his "deep sense of the uniform kindness and handsome treatment" which had been extended to him by the governing body. But although William Batt had thus been informed that the Committee were desirous of making a change, it was more than twelve months before they could find a successor. He was still Superintendent when the Committee found that there had been "some relaxation in the due care and oversight of the boys in their playtime." Three months later they reverted to the subject, and recorded their opinion that "the Master should provide for the constant oversight of the boys." It may be observed that, as the principal teacher lived out of the house, the two apprentices must not infrequently have been left in charge. The fact that Barton

Dell gave notice of his wish to leave at once, instead of waiting the stipulated three months, suggests that he took this censure as personal to himself. And thus it happened that the two men who had had so much to do with the management for the long term of eighteen years, left at the same time.

Barton Dell remained in the profession for some years, but ultimately gave up teaching and joined his brother "in a watch and clock business in Bristol, in which he continued from 1851 to 1867, when failing health occasioned his retirement." He was the author of two books on religious subjects, entitled, "The Fool's Gospel,"—a title founded on the phrase, "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein,"—and "Man's Great Debt."

The number of scholars in the last year of William Batt's rule was eighty-four, and the cost per head was £20, 17s. When he came to the School in 1821 the Staff consisted of an assistant and an apprentice in the boys' house, and a Governess and an apprentice for the girls, whose united salaries amounted to less than £40 a year. When William Batt left Sidcot the Staff comprised one teacher and two apprentices on each side of the house, and these six officers received together the sum of £152 per annum.

In many ways the School life during the greater part of this period was similar to that of the earlier years. The Education, although considerable advance was certainly made towards the end of the time, was much the same. The food was the same. The only marked change in the appearance of the tables was the introduction of spoons, which seem to have been sparingly used, if at all, before 1830. That, at any rate, was the first year in which they were bought in any quantity. "I don't recollect any spoons," said an old scholar, in reply to the writer's question on the subject. "I don't know what they could have been wanted for." There were still no cloths on the long dining-tables, whose surfaces "were a good deal eaten by worms, although kept

scrupulously clean." Those were days of slender water-supply, and several old scholars speak of the "large pewter mug, full of water, placed at each corner of the table, and handed round from boy to boy twice during the meal, and when empty held aloft to be refilled by the waiters." A teacher of the time has left on record his impression that, except at meal-times, drinking-water was hardly to be had at all. The rule that enjoined "no unnecessary talking during meals" was still strictly enforced; and to talk to one's neighbour at table was a penal offence. Before the new School was built, the main part of the cooking appears to have been done at the Boys' House. "The girls," says a teacher of William Batt's time, "used to come up to us to get their supply of meat, &c., ready cooked, and carry it down to their own house."

The costume, again, was much the same. In 1825 it was ruled that the boys might wear trousers instead of breeches; and in 1837 the use of trousers became general. Coats and waistcoats were still of the same rough, dark claret-coloured cloth, and the breeches or trousers were still of corduroy. "So far from disliking this costume," says an old scholar, "it was the ambition of new-comers to get as speedily as possible attired in the School livery, so as to be like the boys who were there before them." Night-shirts were first worn at Sidcot in 1837.

In the tailors' and milliners' bills of this period, as in the former one, we occasionally come upon strange names of materials. Who now asks in a shop for "corbeau cloth," for example? Who, without a dictionary, could say what manner of stuff "ferret" was, or "mince," or "inkle"? "Daffle" is perhaps another form of "duffel"; and "vigonia" may be a variation of "vicuna." Another curious word in the old accounts is "gurgeons"; but that was an eatable, not a wearable; and was a coarse kind of meal, sifted from the bran, and was used in the farm-yard.

There is not much of interest to note in connection with the prices of food. Tea, which at the beginning of the period had been 10s. a pound, had fallen to 6s. by 1839. Loaf-sugar was 10d. a pound, and cocoa 1s. 1d. Bread varied, perhaps according to quality, from 6d. to 8½d. the quartern. A very interesting point is that many of the tradesmen who supplied the School were Friends. Thus, we find the names of Withy, Bobbett, Gundry, Tanner, Wilmott, Ring, Gilpin, Thomas, Rutter, Wedmore, Naish, Clark, Metford, Butler, Hunt, and Simpson constantly recurring in the old accounts.

Methods of travel, again, were much what they were when the School was founded. The Bristol and Exeter Railway was indeed in the making, but it was not opened for some years after the close of this period. Scholars still reached Sidcot by stage-coach, or post-chaise, or "caravan," or even by carrier's cart, whose journey from Bristol sometimes occupied six hours. "The Bristol boys, of whom I was one," writes an old scholar, "were sent home by coach, and a very jolly time we had on the road, singing and shouting nearly all the way." It may be remembered that the main high-road which passes to the north and west of the School was greatly improved in the year 1829. That was the year when the road which formerly climbed over the top of Churchill Batch was cut below it, in the valley opposite Dolbury Camp. So difficult were in those days the means of communication, that visitors to the Sidcot General Meeting not infrequently walked all the way from Bristol.

Lamps fed with whale or seal oil now took, to some extent, the place of candles; but dips and rush-lights continued to be the ordinary means of illumination. Nor were flint and steel yet superseded by lucifer matches, which were only now coming gradually into use. Postage was still high, averaging for boys of the West Country about 7d. a letter. One old scholar of the time has declared that the letters he



sent home cost his parents a penny a line. Envelopes, which came in with the Penny Post, were, of course, not yet invented.

Few allusions to the health of the scholars are to be found in the Minute-books of the time. Entries in the cash-book, of payments for medical attendance, drugs, and nursing, are suggestive of illnesses more or less important. But there seem to have been few serious outbreaks of disease. In the spring of 1834 scarlet fever spread extensively in the Boys' School. There were a few severe cases, but all recovered; and the epidemic, which lasted a month, was confined to the one House. It was also in 1834 that an apprentice named Joshua Weymouth died of a disease of the lungs. In 1836, a few days before the summer vacation, a boy name Francis Lovell died of apoplexy, caused by the rupture of an abscess on the brain. This was the second death that had occurred among the scholars since 1808. In the vacation immediately following, one of the girls' teachers, whilst on a visit to the School, developed a mild form of smallpox, the first of only two cases of the complaint which have ever occurred at Sidcot. The return of the children was delayed a week in consequence, and the Committee recommended that all the boys and girls should be re-vaccinated. The medical officer for the greater portion of the time was still Dr Parker; but the name of Edward Wade, for so many subsequent years the School doctor, appears in the books for the year 1837.

There was still only one vacation; and even that the Committee, in 1824, proposed to abolish, on the ground that it was injurious to the children and inconvenient to the Institution. The General Meeting did not, however, encourage this retrograde step. The proposition was dropped, and the commencement of the holiday fixed for the second Thursday in June. That arrangement lasted seven years. In 1832 the General Meeting was held on the third Tuesday in June, and the holidays began on the next



day but one. In 1835 there was another change, when the General Meeting was put back to the last Tuesday in April. At one time it was customary to give a cash bonus to every scholar who returned to School on the right day. In July 1834 the sum thus paid amounted to within a few pence of twenty pounds.

## CHAPTER VI

BENJAMIN G. GILKES, 1839-1846

WILLIAM BATT has been described, by one who knew him, as a conscientious but narrow-minded man, imperfectly educated, hard in his dealings with the children, and a drag upon the wheel rather than a motive power in the progress of the School. Benjamin Gilkes, who succeeded him in 1839, was cast in very different mould. Cultured, clever, and kindly although somewhat reserved, he had a real love for learning; and the seven years of his administration contributed very materially to the educational and social improvement of the Institution, in spite of the fact that, like most Head-masters of the Friends' public schools of his time, he had had no training for the post he had undertaken to fill. He had been a watch-maker before he became a school-master; and while at Sidcot he displayed great interest in mechanical and scientific pursuits. He took little active share in the ordinary teaching, but he was a good lecturer; and his experiments and his exhibitions of Phantasmagoria, as the scholars were told to call them in their letters home, are still remembered with pleasure by some who were among his audience.

His wife, Anne Gilkes, was a person of much energy, of whom both boys and girls stood in considerable awe; although she is still spoken of, by some who knew her then, as "a kindly soul." She had a habit, like later Mistresses, of marching slowly up and down the dining-rooms at meal-times, to inspect the appearance of her charges; and woe betide the unfortunate who failed to pass muster! Any boy

whose toilet had been too hastily completed was sure to catch her eye, and to be sternly addressed as "Slov—en slov—en!" with the accompaniment of a smart tattoo from her thimbled finger upon his unprotected head. There were, it is said, times when even girls underwent a similar experience. And as the pupils of Goldsmith's village school-master

" —learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face,"

so the young Quakeresses of Ann Gilkes's time considered that they could divine the condition of her temper from the colour of her morning gown.

Benjamin Gilkes had several children; and the legend is still current in the village that, once, when Solomon Trew, the tax-collector, who lived in the tiny cottage, now fallen into ruin, half-way along the south side of Pattenham, had called at the School to receive the Queen's dues, a little daughter of the Superintendent went up to the visitor, and laying her hand upon his knee, said quietly,

"Art thou that wise Solomon who said, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child'?"

The old man was never tired of telling the story, which the writer heard from a villager to whom it was told by Trew himself. Such were the views of the time with regard to corporal punishment that there can be little doubt that the phrase was one very familiar to the youthful questioner.

The seven years of Benjamin Gilkes's administration were marked by salutary changes and by substantial progress. The teaching staff was increased, and was better paid. The system of Education was improved. The regular teaching of Latin was introduced among the boys, and Drawing was encouraged on both sides of the house. The dietary, too, although still severely simple, changed materially for the better. Gas-works were erected, and a good supply of drinking-water was obtained by laying down a pipe from a spring among the hills. The introduction of penny postage

in 1840 and the opening of the Bristol and Exeter Railway in 1843—although there was then no station nearer than five miles from the School—did much to lessen the remoteness and seclusion of the place. The first postage stamps—a modest three-shillings' worth—were bought in October 1840; and the first entry for "train-hire" is in February 1843. Prior to 1840 letters home were written once a month; and more than one old scholar has alluded to a custom which then prevailed of hanging a board round a boy's neck until he had completed his monthly epistle. Up to 1846 all letters, despatched or received, were read by the Superintendent; but in the last year of Benjamin Gilkes's rule any scholar might obtain leave to write home without showing the letter to a master or mistress. Lucifer matches came into use in England about 1834; but flint and steel still held their ground at Sidcot until 1840, when the cash-book shows that the School paid fourpence halfpenny for its first box of matches.

But although the Institution made very considerable progress under the new Superintendents, there can be no doubt that Benjamin Gilkes and his wife were neither young enough nor strong enough for the arduous work they had undertaken; and it was not long before the deteriorating effects produced upon the School by their advanced age and feeble health became only too apparent. As time went on, the discipline grew lax, and the moral tone was seriously impaired; and the number of scholars consequently diminished.

In January 1846 the Committee, having "entered very seriously and deliberately into a consideration of the present state of the Institution, and as to the causes which may be operating to prevent more children from coming to the School," came to the conclusion that the establishment had suffered and was still suffering "considerable loss, owing, among other causes, to the poor state of the health of both B. and A. Gilkes," and they accordingly deputed three of

their number to confer on the subject with the Superintendent and his wife.

In April of the same year things reached a climax. A mutiny broke out in the boys' wing. The rebels barricaded themselves into one of the bedrooms, and defied their officers to turn them out. The affair was soon over, and the ring-leader was expelled. But the effect on the Institution was important. A special Committee, convened "to take into consideration some circumstances that had recently occurred, found that many of the boys had conspired together to annoy the teachers, in a rather formidable manner"; and they were unanimous in the conclusion that, owing in great measure to the impaired health of Benjamin and Ann Gilkes, "the management and superintendence of the institution" were not satisfactory, and they recommended the Master and Mistress to resign their situations at the next Committee. These officers accordingly did, in May 1846.

The authorities could, at first, find no suitable successors; and when, in August, none had yet been found, the Committee asked Benjamin Gilkes to stay. This, not unnaturally, he declined to do, and he left the School on the following quarter-day, taking up his residence, for a time, at a house on the Bristol Road, opposite the end of the Avenue, a house which, like Winterhead Farm at the other end, had then the reputation of being haunted.

When Barton Dell, the able though severe head-teacher under William Batt, left Sidcot in 1839, there was considerable difficulty in filling his post. The first man who was appointed, coming "on trial for three months," was obliged to retire almost at once, through ill-health. His successor stayed only a few months; and, at the General Meeting of 1840, there was no senior teacher at all on the boys' side. There was, however, a very able junior, Martin Lidbetter, who, having been apprenticed in 1834, had not yet served his full term. He made himself so useful to the School that three times, in the course of the years 1840 and 1841, the



Committee voted him a special honorarium of five pounds, because of "the extra work which had devolved upon him in consequence of there being no teacher." In 1841, having completed his seven years, a feat which very few of the many Sidcot apprentices have accomplished, he was made head-teacher, at a salary of £40 a year. In two years this was increased to £60. Two years later still, when he married, his salary was raised to £80, with the use of Rose Cottage, then lately built, at a pepper-corn rent of one shilling per annum. To this was afterwards added the use of the garden "between the grave-yard and the road"; and his salary was ultimately increased to £120 a year. One of his colleagues, then an apprentice, speaks of Martin Liddbetter as the ablest officer of the time, an excellent teacher, a firm but kind disciplinarian, and an active promoter of and sharer in the boys' games.

Another master who made his mark upon the School at this period was Samuel Fothergill, who, in 1841, proposed to come for twelve months, "to qualify himself as a teacher," with no salary but his board and washing. It was not long before he was offered £40 a year as second master; and in 1844 this sum was raised to £50. He was a man of much originality and great enthusiasm; a good teacher, especially of Reading, and he took much part in the boys' leisure-time pursuits, particularly in Carpentering, and in Drawing and in Water-colour Painting, in which latter art he himself showed no little skill.

The real teacher is, like the true poet, born, not made. And the success of these two men was due solely to their own natural aptitude for their very difficult occupation. The teaching profession was then, as it remained until quite recent years, a refuge for those who were not thought capable of anything better. Anybody, it was commonly considered, could teach. There is, therefore, no ground for surprise that very few of the teachers of Benjamin Gilkes's time remained in the profession. They had had no training,

their pay was small, and their prospects for the future were poor indeed.

There was a gap when Samuel Fothergill left. And when, in January 1846, the Committee made their usual examination, they found that, although the progress of the first class was satisfactory, that of the class below was not so good, "which is no doubt owing to there being no second master in the School." Of apprentices there were again several; but of these William Tallack was the only one, indentured during the period, who completed his full term of seven years. These would-be schoolmasters received no systematic, and very little actual, help in their studies, either from the Headmaster or the senior teachers. Most of them entered on their duties within a few weeks of having been scholars themselves, with no interval but the summer vacation, at most. Of one of the rather numerous company who tried to teach, and became discouraged, and gave up the effort in despair, it is recorded that the Committee, in cancelling his indentures, did so on the ground "that Joshua is not likely comfortably to follow the profession." "Comfortably" was a happy word to choose. The poor fellow was one "whom the boys were glad to take every opportunity of teasing," as a scholar of the time has told the writer. Another apprentice of this period was released in order that he might "embrace the offer of a situation in a hosiery warehouse."

Even William Tallack, who, as mentioned above, served his full term of years, did not remain in the profession. He left teaching in order to devote himself to "literary and secretarial occupations, much more in accordance with his inclinations and tastes"; occupations in which he has been honourably distinguished, both as an author and as secretary of the Howard Association. He is still living, and his "Recollections of Life at Sidcot from 1842 to 1852," written specially for the purpose, have been of most material service in the compilation of this chapter and the next. Those who knew William Tallack at Sidcot well remember his

strong scientific bent, his encouragement among the boys of the study of Natural History, especially of Botany, and the lectures which he gave to the whole School, on Zoology, History, and other subjects.

In 1866 William Tallack founded the Howard Association, a body which has done most useful work in stimulating and guiding public opinion with regard to the best ways of preventing crime and of treating criminals; and he was Secretary to the Society for more than thirty years, having been succeeded in 1902 by Edward Grubb, M.A., who, in turn, in consequence of the pressure of other work, especially in connection with his Editorship of the *British Friend*, resigned office in 1905. William Tallack is the author of two books: "Penological and Preventive Principles," and "Howard Letters and Memories," as well as of a very large number of pamphlets and leaflets on the work of the Howard Association, with others on Theological and Quaker subjects. He is also well known as a contributor to the *Times*, *Spectator*, and other prominent journals.

The education given at Sidcot in Benjamin Gilkes's time was still of a simple character, but it was thorough as far as it went. And when the narrow scope of the curriculum is considered, it is not surprising to find that the standard then reached in Reading, Writing, Geography and Mental Arithmetic was really of a high order. English Grammar, again, was thoroughly taught, the text-book being still that of the once famous Lindley Murray. English Composition was a regular school subject, and during the period under review there were not a few good essay-writers. The Geographical manual was Stewart's, which, like Murray's "Grammar," remained in use for another twenty years. In addition to ordinary reading, much encouragement was given to the learning and recitation of poetry, both in and out of School. In 1842, a Professor of Elocution, named Barber, gave to both scholars and staff a course of lessons which had a marked effect, being well followed up by the teachers,

especially by Samuel Fothergill, whose class became remarkably good readers.

The Committee of the time displayed a close interest in the education of the scholars, whom they personally examined twice a year, in addition to the public examination at the General Meeting. In 1839 the governing body asked the Superintendent to draw up a detailed scheme of instruction, "so as to define as nearly as may be the system of Education to be adopted at this Institution." At a later sitting the Head-master was "desired to visit Ackworth and other schools in the north," with a view of discovering how the methods then in use at Sidcot might be improved. An entry in the cash-book shows that he went to Ackworth, Penketh, Rawdon and Fearnhead; but the note of his expenses seems to be the only thing recorded of his journey. The Educational Conference held at Ackworth in 1842 was attended by three of the Sidcot Committee, who reported that "several important discussions took place, relating chiefly to the moral and religious training of the youth of our Society." The General Meeting of 1841 directed the preparation of a "Time Table, defining the time devoted to each subject"; and also called for a list of suitable school-books, "embracing some of a higher literary and scientific character than had been previously used." Among the school-books then introduced was a series of "Readers" arranged by an Irish Educational Committee; and these continued in use for a quarter of a century. "The History of the Present State of the British Empire" and Paley's "Natural Theology" may be quoted as examples of the works of higher grade. To the present generation the name of Mrs Trimmer is probably familiar only through Calverley's "Lovers and a Reflection"; but that lady's "History of the Robins" was one of the books bought for the Girls' Library at Sidcot sixty years ago. It may be observed that considerable sums were, during this period, laid out in books for what was known for many years as the Officers' Library.



The General Meeting of 1841 commented on the "proficiency of the boys in the higher branches of their Education," and alluded specially to Geometry and Astronomy, which had evidently been recently introduced into the curriculum. In 1844 Latin, hitherto only taught in play-hours when taught at all, was made a School subject. The boys' first class were to study Valpy's "Grammar" and "Delectus" for one hour before breakfast, instead of Spelling, to which the whole of that time had previously been devoted. Drawing continued to be solely a leisure-time pursuit; but in 1840, it having been reported that the boys had been collecting money among themselves to buy "materials to enable them to learn drawing," the Committee voted two pounds to the fund, and arranged that the girls should share the benefit. In 1842 Friends subscribed money to buy scientific apparatus, so as to enable Benjamin Gilkes and the masters to give those experimental and lantern lectures to which allusion has already been made. Music was discountenanced as sternly as ever; but it is still remembered that one of the boys possessed a large Jews'-Harp, on which he played many airs, and, in particular, "Rousseau's Dream." Gymnastic training was little heard of in those days, but both boys and girls were drilled with clubs; and any girl addicted to stooping was made to march up and down the school-room with a board balanced on her head. The girls clearly had fewer educational advantages than the boys, and shorter hours, at least for ordinary lessons. For three hours every afternoon they had "sewing-school" for mending and making garments, during which time one of the teachers usually read aloud from *Chambers's Miscellany* or *Chambers's Journal*, which were sent specially for the purpose by the father of one of the girls.

Two years before the accession of Benjamin Gilkes the Sidcot authorities prepared a book in which to enter the names of all children who came to school, with notes of their attainments in twelve different subjects—Reading,



Spelling, Writing, Grammar, Geography, Sewing, Knitting, Darning, Marking, Arithmetic, Tables and Scripture. The fact that Sewing, Knitting, Darning and Marking are separately entered shows what importance was attached to these useful arts in the days of our ancestors. Most girls could knit a little when they came to school; the first stage in the art was the making of garters. It was originally intended to keep a record of the progress of each individual scholar, at intervals of a few months, year after year. But although this was done for some years, the entries became fewer as time went on; until, towards 1853, when the book was no longer used, nothing was put down beyond each child's attainments on first coming to school. The record throws an interesting light upon the home education of the time, and suggests that the teacher's lot may not have been a happier one seventy years since than it is to-day.

In 1839 appears this note about a girl just nine years old: "Reading, very poor. Can spell simple words of three letters. Writing, cannot. Knitting, a little. Sewing, poor." Under each of the remaining seven heads, the verdict is briefly "None."

Another child, admitted in the same year, could not, even at the age of twelve, read "Words of two letters"! Her Writing was limited to "strokes." In spelling she seemed "to have hardly any idea of the simplest words." Her education had gone no farther. Worse still was the case of a girl who came to school having "Just learned her letters; nothing more."

Occasionally there are notes of a different character. Thus, a child of nine "Discovers a forwardness (bordering on pertness) that will require checking." Poor little mite! One would like to have her impressions of the examiner, and to know whether the "forwardness" was ever taken out of her or not. Towards the end of the book occur some interesting personal touches. Thus, on one particular page we have these entries relative to four new boys:—

"Appears a very nice child."

"Apparently a steady, orderly boy."

"Seems a nice little boy."

"A boy of quick perceptions, and likely to get on well in his studies."

All four are still living. All four, it is hardly necessary to add, are grave and reverend seigniors, who might perhaps smile at the idea of being spoken of in such terms, even in the dew of their youth, and with the untarnished bloom of home life and love still upon them.

The Scriptural instruction at Sidcot, at this period, was thorough of its kind, and the scholars were well drilled in Bible History and in the repetition of Passages. Some of the latter, chiefly from the Old Testament, were frequently repeated in chorus. "But rarely, if ever," writes a scholar of the time, "did either the teachers or even the Superintendent explain or dwell upon the religious and moral lessons, the real meaning of these texts and chapters, or their bearing upon personal life and conduct." On Sunday evenings the whole School met in what was then and for many subsequent years the girls' school-room, but is now the reading-room; where, in slight variation from the original custom that prevailed in the early days of the School's history, a chapter of the Bible was read by a boys' teacher, a psalm by a boy, then a chapter by one of the girls' teachers, and a psalm by one of the girls. The Bible-reading was sometimes followed by a brief address from the Superintendent, who occasionally read extracts from a biographical or religious work.

The principal speaker in the meetings for Worship, during this period, was Mary Tanner, whose quiet, gentle ways and low, clear tones are still vividly remembered by many Sidcot scholars. Her son William Tanner, a man of culture, and an authority on local Geology and Botany, was also a general favourite. He took great interest in the people of Cheddar, where, as in Woodborough, he was fond of giving public readings from the works of Barnes, the Dorset poet, whose friend he was, and whose poems were written in a

dialect very similar to that of Somerset. William Tanner measured the height of Cheddar Cliffs by the simple process of lying at full length on the top of the loftiest pinnacle, and thence letting down a plummet into the gorge below.

The boys still continued to work on the land; and in 1842 a gardener was engaged who was not only to have charge of such ground as was devoted to fruit and flowers and vegetables, but was to give definite instruction in agriculture to the scholars. He was rough in his dealings with his class, whose complaints of his conduct ultimately led to his dismissal. Many a Sidcot scholar of sixty years since still remembers how, when a young urchin, flagging a little at his work,—pulling frozen turnips, perhaps, on a bitter winter's morning,—his tingling ears were saluted by the gardener's favourite phrase, "No skulking, there!" And how, if that failed, there followed a threat to hale the delinquent before the Master, with "a bad charàcter." In the end it was the gardener himself who received the "bad charàcter."

Another well-remembered figure of the time is Joseph Ham, the Axbridge shoe-maker, who rode to the School on a "dandy-horse," a primitive bicycle, without cranks or pedals, which he propelled by striking his feet against the ground; and who, one severe winter, when much sliding had worn the shoes down more than usual, was heard to say: "I must ask the Master to have no more frost on the playground!" He had served as a soldier in the Anglo-American War of 1812; and the boys were never tired of hearing him describe how the Yankees attacked a mill that was held by his regiment, and how his comrades and he had many a time tried in vain to bring down General Jackson, the American Commander-in-Chief, as he rode by on his white horse, conspicuous enough, but well out of range of the smooth-bore, flint-lock muskets of the time.

For only a few years during this period was there anything of the nature of a Literary Society. The last recorded

meeting of the "Juvenile Society" was held on the 9th of September 1831, after which followed a gap of nine years in which no such association seems to have existed. In 1842 the old Minute-book, which had been begun in 1823, was taken over by the "Mutual Improvement Society," which had apparently commenced its short-lived career in November 1840, when Martin Lidbetter was Secretary. The meetings, nominally held every Saturday, were somewhat irregular, and there seems to have been no business except the reading of Essays, for which Prizes were offered every quarter. The Society also bought books, such as Arago's "Lectures on Astronomy," Lamartine's "Travels in Palestine" and "The History of the Assyrians," and they subscribed to a scientific newspaper. The Association did not live long. Its last meeting was held on the 11th of February 1843.

But although the Mutual Improvement Society appears to have been purely literary in its aims, except for its scientific paper, the encouragement given to the study of Natural History by Martin Lidbetter and William Tallack, and the more scientific spirit which prevailed under Benjamin Gilkes, led to the formation of many collections, especially of plants and insects. It is interesting to know that Maxmills was famous even then for its graceful snowdrops, its delicate bog-bean and its many-hued orchises; that the young botanists of those days gathered arrow-head and flowering-rush on Axbridge Moors, purple gromwell in Cheddar Wood, and the famous pink among the Cliffs themselves; and that the fern-hunters knew where the lime-stone polypody struggled up among the screes of Cheddar Gorge, and where the adder's-tongue and the moon-wort grew, in the short grass of Sidcot Hill. It was at this time that there were first placed on the sills of the school-room windows the long-familiar rows of bottles, in which were displayed, each with its descriptive label, the wild-flowers of the district as they came into bloom.

Sandford was as famous then for its wild-flowers and its



insects as it is to-day, and was a favourite haunt on summer days. Once, when the boys got back to the School, after spending some hours upon the hill, it was found that a boy was missing. A party sent to look for him heard, after a long and fruitless search, and just as the dusk was closing in, a faint cry for help, from the open shaft of an old calamine-pit. The pit was not deep, and the boy, although unable to climb its steep sides without help, was rescued unhurt. "Very occasionally" the boys were allowed to visit Banwell Caves, then shown by Beard, their original explorer, who had found in one of the caverns an immense number of bones of animals long extinct in this country, such as the cave-bear, the wolf, the glutton, the arctic fox, the reindeer, the wild ox and the bison; and who, in his way, was as great a curiosity as the relics he was so fond of showing. Among the old man's possessions was one that was said to have belonged to Marie Antoinette, and that was described in the catalogue (written in verse, by Beard himself) as

"The Queen of France her tea-pot  
Which died by the guillotine."

In Benjamin Gilkes's time there was a workshop, adjoining the shed which ran across the top of the playground; and in this the young carpenters of the period did a good deal of wood-carving, and built "quite a fleet of boats and ships, varying from a foot to four feet in length." These were sailed on the ponds of the district, and sometimes even upon the sea itself. On one occasion a party of such navigators were busy with their craft on the seaward side of Birnbeck—long since joined to the mainland by a pier, but then an island—when a messenger came running from the landward shore with the news that the tide was rising fast. When the boys had got their boats together, and had reached the other side of Birnbeck, they found themselves cut off by the sea. The bigger members of the party waded across, carrying their lighter companions on their backs. They were only



just in time. In a few minutes more it would have been impossible to cross. There were no boats, and it would have been hours before the young marooners could have got away.

Cricket was much played at this period, both on the playground and in the field called Kidborough, on the opposite side of the Axbridge Road from the present playing field; occasionally on the top of Callow, as was foot-ball, at a later time. But in the forties, foot-ball was almost unknown. Fives, which was played all the year round, and Prisoner's Base were the most popular games with the boys. On the girls' playground, where there were swings, a jumping-board, and a giant-stride, the fine Canadian game of La Crosse was very popular, together with various running games.

The Reminiscences of old scholars suggest that the general tone of the Boys' School during this period, and especially in the latter half of it, was far from good; and that although there was a strong body of conscientious, hard-working, well-behaved boys, there was also a powerful clique whose influence was such that it became "bad form" for anyone to be seen reading his Bible, or saying his prayers, or in any way showing signs of being "pious." This state of things, which, as already remarked, led to a rapid decline in the number of scholars, was due, in great part, to the ill-health and infirmity of the Head-master, and to some extent, no doubt, to the frequent changes in the Staff. Discipline, which had been too severe under the former administration, now became too lax. An old scholar of the early forties declares that he was "let off many a punishment" on account of his skill at Fives!

The many vexatious rules and restrictions of the time did not tend to foster a good spirit in the School. Boys and girls, except when nearly related, were kept as strictly apart as the authorities could keep them. There was even a rule that if a boy saw a girl coming along the passage towards him, he was to turn his face to the wall until she had passed. But the enforced and almost monastic separation defeated its own

ends. In spite of all that the Powers could do, notes and messages and presents were freely exchanged between lads and lasses who seldom or never saw one another except at Meeting or at Sunday Evening Reading. "In one way or another," writes an old scholar who knew the place well at this period, "most boys and girls took a special interest in some one member of the other wing; sometimes in more than one. A certain Somersetshire girl . . . was known among the boys as 'The Forty-nine,' from the reported number of her acknowledged favourites." Examination of the lists of the period shows that, if she really deserved the title, all the boys in the School, except four, must have been in the train of this young Circe. On one occasion an irate mother persuaded Benjamin Gilkes to call up, before all the scholars, her two little daughters, then lately come, when they were made to give up, then and there, the presents they had received from their two young cavaliers; after which the poor damsels were promptly taken home, that they might breathe no more the dangerous atmosphere of Sidcot.

The ordinary punishments for school offences were detention during play-hours, and the writing of impositions. The cane and the leather strap were, however, still in use to the close of Benjamin Gilkes's administration. A favourite phrase of his, especially when troubled, as he often was, with gout, was "Thy jacket needs dusting!" And dusted it accordingly was. But after 1846 corporal punishment was very rarely employed. It is significant of a changing view that, two years before that date, the Committee called for a list of all the canings which had been inflicted during the previous quarter.

The improved conditions of life under Benjamin and Ann Gilkes were nowhere more conspicuous than in the dietary. So far this had been "seriously deficient, both in quality and quantity." But, although the writer was lately assured by a scholar of the period that he "was damaged for life by innutritious food," in the early forties, the general impression

seemsto be that the fare provided was "fairly satisfactory . . . healthful and sufficient, and adequately helpful to sustain the scholars in good health and strength." There was no "animal food" for dinner on Meeting-days; the authorities having an entirely mistaken impression that the comparative inactivity of those days rendered meat unnecessary. Spoons appear to have come into general use at this time. In 1841 a dozen of them, made of German silver, cost sixteen shillings. There is a curious entry about spoons in 1846:—

"Paid for two silver spoons supposed to be stolen at the General Meeting . . . £1. 7. 0."

An old scholar who knew Sidcot in 1844 and later has assured the writer that no cups were allowed at the evening meal, then and for many years afterwards known as "supper"; and that the boys drank water out of jugs which were passed from hand to hand, after the custom described in the previous chapter.

The costume of the children remained much the same as before. The boys were dressed in dark-coloured cloth jackets and waistcoats, of severe Quakerly cut, plain and collarless, nominally black, but with a tinge of olive green; and they wore trousers of corduroy. As a rule, neither hats nor caps were worn. "To this," wrote an old scholar, in 1906, "I attribute my somewhat luxuriant crop of hair at my present age, 77." The girls wore stuff frocks all the year round, except when engaged in one of the numerous domestic "offices," when the dress was of print. Sundays were marked by the addition of white sleeves and tippets. Those worn on week-days were of nankeen. All the inmates of the Girls' Wing, scholars and teachers alike, wore Friends' bonnets, which, in the case of the children, were taken off during Meeting, and hung on the rail of the seat in front, being very stiff and uncomfortable for prolonged use. Straw bonnets, almost entirely innocent of trimming, were allowed during walks.

The "offices" above alluded to were continued, in modified form, for many years after this period. In Benjamin Gilkes's day, boys were appointed, in sets of two or more, who, for a week at a time, cleaned all the boots and shoes, laid the tables for meals, waited at table, cleared away afterwards, cleaned the knives and forks and plates and dishes, and swept out the rooms.

There were several outbreaks of illness during this period. In the autumn of 1842, scarlatina, then very prevalent in the neighbourhood, appeared on the Boys' Side, and ultimately spread through the School, lasting for some months. Nearly all the forty-one cases were reported to be slight, and all recovered, although the disease had been malignant in the village. When the patients were all convalescent, the Committee made a Minute acknowledging with gratitude the "judicious and unremitting care" with which Benjamin and Anne Gilkes had "performed the arduous and trying duties which had devolved upon them." In 1844 influenza was very prevalent, and in the following year measles and scarlatina broke out together. The cases were all slight, but it was considered safer to hold the General Meeting of 1846 at Bristol instead of at Sidcot.

The sick-rooms of those days were the laundry and a smaller room to the west of the kitchen, overlooking the girls' playground. There was only one matron, to attend to both boys and girls; and, as might be expected, ailments, especially slight ailments, were treated with scant ceremony. The usual instrument for lancing a gathered finger was a pair of scissors, and the common remedies were peppermint-water, ginger-tea, salts and senna.

The medical officer was Dr Wade, whose rubicund face and burly figure are remembered by generations of Sidcot scholars. He was a capable and vigorous practitioner, rough at times in his manner, it is true, but a skilful operator, and possessed of keen powers of diagnosis. In his garden at Cross he grew a number of medicinal plants, such as henbane



and foxglove, from whose products he compounded some of his drugs. The story goes that, one night, as he was driving home, and had just passed Shute Shelve, a man emerged from a clump of old Scotch firs to the left of the road, caught the horse by the bridle, and demanded the doctor's purse.

"Be off, you rascal!" returned the undaunted doctor, "or I'll give you some blue pills!"

The would-be highwayman stepped back, and Dr Wade drove on. The writer has reason to believe that the doctor was entirely unarmed, and carried no weapon from which the metaphorical "blue-pills," that is to say, pistol-bullets, could have been delivered.

Not a few of the drugs used in the School were dispensed by Edward Hallam, a Friend who kept a chemist's shop in Axbridge, and whose house was a favourite place of call for the Sidcot teachers and others. He was an ardent botanist, and was fond, on fine afternoons, of riding off to Brean Down or the Turf Moors, or to the top of Mendip, in search of rare plants, leaving his wife in charge of the shop.

In the Records for 1845 there are suggestions that doubts were beginning to be felt about the water-supply. So far, at least since 1821, all the drinking-water used in the School had been brought from Hale Well, and had been pumped up to a cistern in the roof. In this cistern, by the way, one of Benjamin Gilkes's staff was caught in the act of bathing! "The boys soon had pictures of him, swimming for his life." In January 1845, while the Committee were preparing to consider plans for the filtration of the water, someone suggested that it would be a great advantage if pipes could be laid down from a spring among the hills, by means of which water could be brought into the house. The proposition was at once adopted, and no time was lost in carrying it into effect. The work was completed in the course of 1846, at the very moderate cost of £235, 18s. 6d., all of which was covered by subscription. The source of the supply was the same as at present,—a spring, or, rather, a







*W. Day, Brighton*

WILLIAM DAY

cluster of springs in thecombe between Sidcot Hill and Winterhead Hill. But the field was not then, as it is now, the property of the Institution, which paid five shillings a year for the right-of-way up the line of pipes to the spring. The supply-pipe of 1846 was of lead, of no more than three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Soon after it was laid the supply of water suddenly ceased; and it was found that, small as the pipe was, a frog had squeezed itself into the entrance of it.

The other important improvement of the period was the introduction of gas. In the autumn of 1841 the Committee requested the firm of Tregelles & Fox—Edwin O. Tregelles and Francis Fox, C.E.—to furnish plans and drawings for gas-works which it was proposed to erect at Sidcot. The work was finished early in 1842, and the Committee reported to the General Meeting of that year that the “gas apparatus” had been “some time in work, very much to the comfort and advantage of the establishment.” The gas-works of sixty years since, much smaller and simpler than those now in use, were entirely inside the farm-yard, to the right of the gate leading into the Long Garden. For a long period they were under the care of William Day, who, in his youth, had been a Shipham miner, and whose spare figure and careworn face and quaint forms of speech are remembered by all who were familiar with the old farm precincts. Illiterate although he was, he was always keenly interested in any work that was being done in the ancient laboratory, which was close to his little kingdom; and he always wanted to know from the meteorologists how much there was in what he called the “hrine gorge” that morning. He was a careful man in his work, and there was only one “serous axigant,” as he put it, in the whole of his forty years’ service. That was long after this period, when the gas-holder having sprung a leak, the escaping gas caught fire, forming a column of flame many feet high, which severely scorched the face of the Head-master himself.

The gas-works were not the only buildings erected at this time on the School estate. The Long Garden, and other parts of the land immediately adjoining the premises, had so far been copy-hold; and the Committee had no power to pull down the now disused Girls' School. Shortly after the completion of the new premises, however, an arrangement was made with the Dean and Chapter of Wells, the lords of the soil, by which that body's copy-hold rights were transferred to the three free-hold fields lying to the west of the Bristol Road. This exchange, which, although not strictly legal, was felt to be to the advantage of both sides, was effected in 1839, at a cost of nearly £100. It may be added that all the School land was made free-hold thirty years later.

The old buildings remained standing until 1841. They were too dilapidated to be used; but a Friend offered to erect, on their site, a new house which, after a brief term of years, should revert to the School. But although the authorities seem to have approved of the plan, it was not carried into effect; and in 1841 the old School, the thatched cottage formerly occupied by Charles Strode, and the stables adjoining, were all pulled down by John Nigh, the mason so long associated with the Institution. The materials were used to build Rose Cottage, the laboratory — now the photographic room—the cow-house adjoining, the stables, coach-houses, and gas-works. The cost of these improvements, amounting to rather more than £1000, was defrayed by special subscription, in which many old scholars took part.

Another change in the Long Garden was the disappearance of the long avenue of lime-trees, which once extended from the row of elms called the Committee Friends to the old Meeting-house of 1718. These limes, together with "the useless trees in the orchard"—useless now, because they bore only cider-apples—were cut down in 1840, by order of the Committee. It was also in the year 1840 that there occurred at Sidcot a very violent thunderstorm, which

wrecked many fine old trees in the neighbourhood, and, as a scholar of the time remembers, broke "almost every pane in the windows of the dormitories."

The seven years of Benjamin Gilkes's government were, in the main, prosperous years in many ways. Unfortunately, however, the finances of the Institution did not prosper in proportion. Salaries and the cost of living went up; but the amount of the annual subscriptions, on which the authorities had been led to believe that they could rely, was by no means always sufficient to make up the inevitable and anticipated loss, and the balance was frequently on the wrong side of the account. The period began with a heavy debt, the major part of the cost of the new building; and the interest on this debt was a serious drag upon the resources of the School. Again and again the appearance of the balance-sheet aroused the alarm of the General Meeting, and again and again were appeals issued for more generous contributions. It was well for the School that there was no question now of cheese-paring, either in the diet or in the quality of the Staff. A Minute made in 1842 runs thus:—

"While anxious to encourage economy, the Committee have thought it second to the efficiency of the establishment, and the health and comfort of the inmates."

That pronouncement was made when there were outstanding loans amounting to £3500, when there was a balance due to the treasurer of nearly £1000, and when the year's expenditure had exceeded the income by £250. In 1844 a very strong appeal—stronger than usual, and there was an appeal in every single Annual Report during the period—was made for help; and in the following year the subscriptions increased by £95 and the donations by £23. Even then, however, had it not been for £72 received in legacies, the balance would have been against the Institution. The total amount of annual subscriptions did not fluctuate much during the period; but it is worthy of note that while, in the last two years, they were £347 and £280 respectively, the



cost per head was £21 and £24, the increasing cost being due partly to diminished income and partly to the reduced number of scholars, which, in 1846, amounted to no more than sixty-five, all told. The Bridgwater Estate, which had been increased by the purchase, by means of legacies, of additional pieces of land, was steadily rising in value, and in Benjamin Gilkes's last year produced a net return of £359, 13s. 3d., which was more than the subscriptions received in any single year of the period. When Benjamin Gilkes left the School, the salaries of the entire Staff, which consisted of the Superintendent and his wife, a matron, and one senior teacher and two apprentices on each side of the house, amounted to slightly over £300, a rise of rather more than £50 in the seven years.

## CHAPTER VII

JOHN EDEY VEALE, 1846-1847 ; JOHN FRANK, 1847-1852 ;  
MARTIN LIDBETTER, 1852-1853

WHEN, in 1846, Benjamin Gilkes resigned the Headmastership of Sidcot, there were three applicants for the post. The candidate selected by the Committee was John Frank, who, as he was at the time conducting a school of his own at Thornbury, could not enter on his new duties until the beginning of the following year ; whereupon John Edey Veale, of St Austell, who, as one of the Agents, already had some slight knowledge of the School, offered, with his wife Hannah Veale, to take charge of the establishment in the interval. Benjamin and Ann Gilkes left Sidcot on the 29th of September, and the two volunteers arrived on the following day.

John Veale, described by some who knew him as "a simple, good man," and as "the soul of kindness," took little or no part in the teaching during his brief rule of four months ; but it is clear that he and his wife managed the School to the entire satisfaction of the authorities, who cordially thanked them for their voluntary services. To the scholars John Veale was best known through his solicitude for their health. He had, it is said, a panacea for all ills. To his mind ipecacuanha was the remedy for every ailment, a view not shared, as may be imagined, by his youthful patients. It was long remembered in the School that once, when there was a discussion at the General Meeting on the subject of diet, some amusement was caused by the fact that the most strenuous advocate of vegetarianism was Thomas Pease,

while the advantages of animal food were as strongly emphasized by John Edey Veale.

John and Ann Frank reached Sidcot on New Year's Day, 1847, but, by request of the Committee, the Veales stayed nearly three weeks longer. John Frank was the son of Arnee Frank, the well-known Minister of Bristol Meeting, who was so closely connected with the School in the early days of its history. He and his brother-in-law, Henry Dymond, are the only Sidcot scholars who have been Headmasters of the School. He took more part in the teaching than most of his predecessors, and was especially distinguished for his knowledge of Biblical History. He was a man of considerable culture, and endowed with scientific tastes, particularly for Botany. The impression left on the minds of some who were scholars under him is that of a somewhat austere man. But that this austerity may have been to a great extent superficial is suggested by the recollections of others who knew him more intimately, and who saw deeper than the reserve which so frequently enveloped him. "When that was penetrated," writes one who was long and closely associated with him, both as a pupil and a teacher, "as kindly a heart revealed itself as ever beat in mortal bosom. To me and to others known to me," continues the writer, "he was goodness itself; and, if we are permitted to recognize each other in 'another place,' it will be a joy indeed to me to greet him and his gentle wife of old Sidcot days."

There can be no doubt, however, that, in general, he was strict, and even harsh, in his dealings with the boys, and that the discipline of that day was marked, like that of a former period, by a tendency on the part of the authorities to make too much of trivial faults. "The system of the time," writes another old scholar, "was not based on confidence and love and trust, but on fear and strict watching—which failed, and on codes of duty and not of honour." Nor were the tone and temper of the School improved by the systematic encouragement of boys to "appeal against their teachers, even

on the slightest matters." It is even remembered that John Frank laid down "a special strip of carpet in the Committee-room for the frequent applicants to walk on!" It may readily be imagined that "the teachers' authority and influence were, in consequence, considerably weakened."

It is remembered of Ann Frank,—“a dear, kind little woman,”—that by her exhortations at the Sunday evening Readings she “exercised a more directly religious influence over the children than perhaps any one else at Sidcot” during this period. She was unfortunate in possessing no sense of humour, and she could seldom be made to see a joke. Dr Wade was once standing by her when the puddings were carried past, on their way to the Sunday dinner-table. The burly doctor, pointing to the dishes, characterised their contents as “mile-stone puddings.”

“Edward Wade!” retorted the indignant Mistress of the household, “what dost thou mean by that?”

The doctor’s explanation, that the plums were a mile apart, did not, as may be imagined, improve the situation.

John and Ann Frank remained at Sidcot rather more than five years, leaving at the summer vacation of 1852. Their successors were Martin Lidbetter and Elizabeth Moore, the former of whom now returned, after a few years spent at Croydon. He and Henry Dymond, who succeeded him, were the only Sidcot apprentices who became Heads of the School. Martin Lidbetter’s wife was not strong; and he undertook the Mastership on the condition that she was to fill “no office in the Institution.” Elizabeth Moore was accordingly appointed Mistress, but Martin Lidbetter was to be responsible for the conduct of the whole establishment. He had been Head of the School about a year when the attention of the Committee was called to the friction which appeared to exist among the Staff, “the Mistress not agreeing with the other officers.” After careful investigation, the Committee, while refraining from direct comments, expressed their “strong desire that any past causes of irritation might

be forgotten." The friction, however, still continued ; and in September 1853 Martin Lidbetter resigned his post. He left at the close of the year, and in January 1854 Henry and Edith Dymond were installed as Superintendents.

During John Veale's brief tenure of office, and when John Frank succeeded him, Martin Lidbetter was teacher of the boys' first class. He, however, left in the following April, immediately after the General Meeting, and it was September before his place was filled. His successor was Charles Gregory Feinaigle, B.A., of Trinity College, Dublin, not a Friend, and also the first University graduate on the School Staff. He was a son of the once famous German professor of Mnemonics, Gregor von Feinaigle, the man alluded to by Lord Byron in his description of Donna Inez, whose

"—memory was a mine ; she knew by heart  
 All Calderon and the greater part of Lopé,  
 So that if any actor missed his part  
 She could have served him for the prompter's copy ;  
 For her Feinaigle's were an useless art,  
 And he himself obliged to shut up shop,—he  
 Could never make a memory so fine as  
 That which adorned the brain of Donna Inez."

Charles Feinaigle, described by his colleagues as an exceptionally able and most interesting man, introduced into the School his father's system, both by the formation of words to remember dates and by means of the association of ideas. Thus the boys were told to imagine a cat climbing up the window-cord in the school-room in order to keep in mind the name of the conspirator Catiline. He is remembered, too, for his attractive and vigorous lessons in Chemistry and Astronomy. During his stay at the School he received from the West Indies a letter whose delivery did credit to the postal officials, for it was addressed to him at

"Sidcoates Academy,  
 Somewhere,  
 England."



Charles Gregory Feinaigle was deservedly popular, both with the boys as a whole and with his colleagues. But, unhappily for the School, there was then among the scholars an unprincipled set, one of whom brought against him an infamous charge, of the truth of which the Committee were too easily convinced. The boy was believed, while the unfortunate and entirely innocent Master, who, it is said, was not even heard in his own defence, was immediately dismissed. Long afterwards the author of this cruel slander confessed that the charge was absolutely without foundation. Nothing more was ever heard of his unhappy victim. But there must be many still living, who, at the time, heard something of the story, and who will rejoice that, by this statement of the facts, justice, all too tardy though it be, has at length been done to the memory of a deeply injured man.

Feinaigle was followed by Philip Thornton, whose brief career was, to the great regret of all who knew and honoured him for his gentle, amiable, and truly noble disposition, broken off by ill-health. "After the lapse of more than half a century," writes one who knew him well, "the leave-taking when he went away stands out in my mind as vividly as if it were yesterday. The size of the School at the time may be judged from the fact that all the boys stood in two lines in the hall; and as he passed down between us with a shake of the hand and a kind word to each, there was hardly a dry eye in the School. We knew only too well that we should never see him back, and that we could never expect to have such a teacher again." He died soon afterwards of consumption.

Philip Thornton was succeeded by Henry Lees, who had been a teacher at Ackworth, and who stayed some years at Sidcot. When Martin Lidbetter became Head-master in 1852, it was decided that, in addition to taking the general management of the Institution, he should teach the boys' first class, Henry Lees being then placed in charge of the second class, but with an increase of his salary.

Another master of the second class, rather earlier in the period, was David Brooks, brother of Edmund Wright Brooks, of Grays, Essex, of whom it is remembered that, partly through a slight acquaintance with their author, he showed a special interest in Moore's "Melodies." Before coming to Sidcot he had been an assistant in a draper's shop at Devizes, where the poet and his wife, who lived in the neighbourhood, were constant customers. David Brooks used to tell how, one day, there came, from a country client, a letter addressed

"To the Young Man at Mr Fox's Shop—  
not the good-looking young man, but the other."

Tradition is silent as to whom the missive was really meant for, but there was some, perhaps not unnatural, hesitation as to who should be the opener of it. Like so many teachers of his time, David Brooks quitted the profession, and after leaving Sidcot, set up in business at Christchurch, where he died.

Of the apprentices on the boys' side at this period, two are still living, and a third has died while this work has been in preparation. William Tallack, who had been indentured in 1845, completed his full term of years—a thing which very few Sidcot apprentices have succeeded in doing—under the administration of John Frank. Another apprentice of the period, who left "in consequence of distaste to the employment," was William Baker, who afterwards emigrated to New Zealand. He is still living, near Auckland, a man of wealth and mark, which it is hardly likely that he would have become had he remained in the profession.

The third of the group was Richard Tangye, who, in October 1848, having been up to that time a scholar in the School, was received "on trial," as an apprentice, and was fully indentured some months later. He did not, however, take kindly to the work of teaching; and after having more than once petitioned the Committee to cancel his indentures,

he was released in the summer of 1852. What finally decided him to change his calling was a sermon preached by William Tanner. "The sermon," wrote Sir Richard, "I forget; but the text was, 'What shall the end thereof be?' I knew if I stayed on I should miss my chance of congenial occupation, and should end in failure, so I went."

It was well for the country that Richard Tangye heard that sermon. But although he did not find in the school-room work that suited him, he was always of opinion that his brief apprenticeship was by no means time and labour thrown away. "I have always felt," he assured the writer, that those three years of discipline and continued study at Sidcot were largely instrumental in shaping my future career." Of that career we have a graphic picture in Sir Richard Tangye's "*Rise of a Great Industry*"—a striking record of indomitable perseverance, of triumph over difficulties, and of marvellous success.

Less than six years after the young apprentice gave his last lesson in the old school-room at Sidcot the *Great Eastern* steamship, Brunel's "*Leviathan*," was, after months of difficulty and after many unsuccessful efforts, launched at Milwall, by the aid of some four-and-twenty hydraulic lifting-jacks, made by the Brothers Tangye. It was the first of many triumphs. As the members of the firm have often said, they floated the *Great Eastern* and the *Great Eastern* floated them. In the years that followed, Richard Tangye and his brothers built up one of the great engineering industries of the Empire. The Cornwall Works, at Smethwick, near Birmingham, just on the edge of the Black Country, cover now some five-and-twenty acres of ground, and provide employment for two thousand people. And, like the ancient town of Nuremberg, the factory stretches out its hand into every clime. Its founders have, moreover, been munificent donors to many public objects; and among all the benefactors of the old School at Sidcot, none have been more generous than Richard and George Tangye.

As long as the Institution lasts, the buildings which they have added will remain as memorials of two of its most distinguished scholars. In 1894 Richard Tangye, as senior partner in the firm, was knighted by Queen Victoria, the only Sidcot scholar upon whom that dignity has been conferred. After a long and painful illness, he died in 1906, at Kingston-on-Thames, in his seventy-third year.

The Girls' Side suffered a good deal, in the early years of this period, from frequent changes in the Staff. The first-class teacher who, "although a sweet little woman, was quite unable to manage high-spirited girls," left Sidcot in November 1846, when Eliza Ferris, then just out of her apprenticeship, took charge of the girls' wing, "under the supervision" of a young Jewess named Eliza Salome, then living at Oakbridge. When Eliza Ferris left, two Friends, Margaret and Anna Maria Dymond of Exeter, undertook between them "the duties of governess" until the appointment of Maria Pumphrey, in February 1847.

Perhaps the most marked and noteworthy feature of this time was the strenuous efforts made by the Committee to improve the standard of instruction in the School. In one respect, indeed, the authorities were in advance of their age, in suggesting to the other Friends' Public Schools a plan which, if it had been carried into effect, might have very materially helped forward the cause of Education throughout the Society. The Sidcot General Meeting of 1849 sent a circular letter to the Committees of Ackworth, Croydon, Wigton, Rawdon, Penketh, Sibford and Ayton, inviting them to consider the appointment of an Inspector for all the Friends' Public Schools, being "deeply impressed with the idea that the periodical visits of a suitably-qualified Friend as Inspector would form a powerful stimulus to exertion on the part of the Teachers and Scholars, and that the hints which he might be able to give, in his more extended observation, would prove very valuable to the individual Schools." The Meeting further suggested that, in case the Committees of



the other Schools should approve of the plan, it would be well to hold a conference of "deputies" to discuss details.

The proposition met with scant encouragement. Only two schools appear to have taken any notice of the Sidcot circular. Of these two, Penketh agreed to the appointment of "deputies," while the authorities of Ayton considered that "it would be inadvisable for them to entertain the subject." For some time no definite answer seems to have been received from any other school. In the end, Sibford alone, of the remaining Institutions, approved of the plan. Ackworth, Croydon and Rawdon did not "see their way to unite in the proposition," and the scheme was consequently abandoned.

The Sidcot Committee, however, undaunted by the unsympathetic attitude of the other schools, resolved to employ an Inspector on their own account; and a little later, in October 1852, William Pengelley, of Torquay, the famous cave-hunter, distinguished in after years for his exploration of Kent's Cavern, and made a Fellow of the Royal Society, "assisted" at the annual examination of the children. His Report, which, unfortunately, has not been preserved, contained "valuable suggestions"; some of which were that more time should be given to "Arithmetic and the Mathematics," that good physical atlases should be provided, and that there should be an interchange of teachers between the two sides of the School. The last suggestion was not adopted until twenty years later, but was among the reforms initiated by Josiah Evans. Another comment was that the scholars appeared to have "learnt less by rote and more from the teacher," and it was also noted that the course of instruction had been carried further than in former years.

In 1853 William Pengelley examined the scholars again, and reported that their "general state" was superior to what it had been twelve months before. It may be added that the examiner declined to accept any remuneration for his services. But he had children in the School, and the Committee deducted



twelve guineas from his account. He inspected the School a third time in 1854, and reported "in favourable terms of the general progress of the children." The first class on each side displayed "a satisfactory knowledge" of the various subjects they had studied, "answering the questions addressed to them with great accuracy and facility." The boys, however, did not read to the Examiner's satisfaction. The Reading of the girls was better, "and, indeed, decidedly good."

In the early part of this period the only Drawing was done out of school, under the auspices of the Drawing Society, which met once a week, in the dining-room. In 1848 a Sub-Committee appointed for the purpose of considering how the subject could be made part of the regular curriculum, reported in favour of Mechanical Drawing, and of Drawing from objects. It is characteristic of the cautious movements of other days that the suggestion was not adopted until 1850. The first class were to have an hour and a half for Drawing every week, and the second class an hour; and a number of wire models were procured. There was at the same time a society for the voluntary study of French, holding two meetings in the week. A feature of the Scripture Examinations, initiated by the Committee in 1849, was the setting of definite parts of the Bible to be studied. For example, beginning with July of that year, the first class were to prepare the Gospel of John, the second class the two books of Samuel, and the third class the first ten chapters of Matthew, all for examination in October. This plan was in use for some years. The list of books bought for the Library in 1851, which may be regarded as some index of the advance of Education, included Humboldt's "Cosmos," Taylor's "Loyola," and Liebig's "Letters on Chemistry." It is interesting to note that the School took in the *Edinburgh Review*, and a little later, when this was discontinued, the *Eclectic Review* and the *Educational Times*.

By the close of this period the School curriculum comprised

Scripture, Reading, Writing, English Grammar, including the Analysis of sentences, and Derivation from Butter's spelling-book, History, Geography, Latin, Arithmetic, Euclid, Algebra, Drawing, and a little Science. Lectures, chiefly scientific, were regularly given during the winter, usually by the Staff. It was at this time, in the year 1849, that the old reflecting telescope and the quaint "Culpepper" microscope were purchased by subscription. The two instruments cost together £11. Scholars of the time allude to work done by one of the masters in the laboratory; but a report on the state of the School, referred to on a later page, suggests that very little attention was paid to Chemistry. There was, it is true, a Chemical Society, whose members "tried experiments in the laboratory, and were the only boys in the School allowed the use of matches"; but the work was of trifling value. Some of the oldest school-books still held their ground; Murray's "Grammar," for example. "I have a vivid recollection," writes a scholar of the time, "of being set to learn by heart strings of meaningless names of counties, rivers, mountains, out of a dismal book called Barton Dell's 'Geography,'" so that that variously-viewed little manual was still in use, sixty years since. As under the previous administration, the boys were drilled, but the gymnastic appliances appear to have been few and primitive.

The leisure pursuits of the boys included the making of collections of birds' eggs, plants, and insects, for which, however, there were no facilities except those afforded by the formal walks, known even then as "pig-drives," in which little attempt seems to have been made to interest the "pigs" in "scenery or natural history or anything." Two newspapers, produced in the School, were in circulation during part of this period. Both were in manuscript. The Committee, for some reason, did not approve of the boys' productions appearing in print, although they wished it to be understood that they were anxious to encourage the art of original Composition. One of these journals, which made its

first appearance in 1849, was under the editorship of Richard Tangye, whose duties "consisted in writing occasional articles, examining other contributions, and making a fair copy of the whole on a foolscap sheet." The venture was short-lived. The rejection by the editor of a manuscript which he did not consider suitable for his columns led to difficulties, and the paper ceased to exist. It is a story rather suggestive of Mark Twain's journalistic experiences, except that, with him, it would have been the editor who ceased to exist. The other newspaper, called *The Sidcot Times*, was a much less ambitious journal, and measured only a few square inches in area.

The Mutual Improvement Society, whose brief career was recorded in the previous chapter, was succeeded in 1852, after a nine years' interval, by the Boys' Literary Society, which still exists, after more than half a century of vigorous and useful life, and which has been of inestimable value in the conduct of the School. Its aims, in the early part of its career, seem to have been literary and artistic. Its chief business was the reading of essays, and the encouragement of drawing and of handicrafts generally. It also bought books for the library, and owned the diminutive newspaper called *The Sidcot Times*.

The games of the period continued to be of a primitive description, at least as regards the two which are most popular at the present day. "Football," writes a scholar of the time, "was a mere casual scramble; a sort of go-as-you-please affair, such as you see lads playing on a village-green of an evening. Cricket was a poor affair, just among ourselves; in a field sometimes." Running games, especially cock-warning, were popular on the playground; there was much flying of kites, and the Fives Tower was in common use.

When new desks were bought for the boys, in 1852, it is noted in the Minutes that they would have been provided before, but for the fact that the school-room was practically

the only place where the boys could play in wet weather. The shed at the top of the playground had, however, been much improved. It had been partially enclosed, and fitted with new sky-lights, and gas had been laid on, so that the boys could play there in greater comfort.

The boys were still employed on the School land, under the direction of the gardener, and with a teacher to keep order. That Pattenham field is free, or comparatively free from colchicum, the so-called Autumn Crocus, whose flowers are the delight of the artist, and whose seeds are hated of the farmer's soul, is due to the Sidcot scholars of John Frank's time, who dug up the bulbs with the old table-knives which formed their chief agricultural implements. There is no record, in the accounts of the period, of any necessity for the employment of a watchman to guard the crops in the Long Garden. But it is said that the Shipham villagers of the time were in the habit of raiding the orchards and potato-plots of the Woodborough men. Sir Richard Tangye remembered hearing John Nigh, the mason so long connected with the School, say—the Sikh War that ended in 1849 fresh in his memory—"They came down like SPIKES from the hill-tops!" Some of the boys had diminutive plots of their own, where they grew flowers and lettuces and radishes. But these plots were along the edge of the playground, not where the boys' gardens now are.

The successor of the rough agricultural instructor alluded to in the previous chapter was Joseph Stephens, a Friend, who, with his son to assist him, was engaged in 1847. He was a man of very different stamp from his predecessor; and it is said by a teacher of the time that his simple life, and his humble and even saintly bearing, were among "the best influences upon Sidcot School" during this period. He was a frequent speaker in the Meeting-house; and it is remembered that, in spite of his broad Gloucestershire dialect, and his ignorance of Lindley Murray, "his solemn words about God and Eternity were among the most impressive and



edifying sermons ever listened to in that place." A labourer, who also worked on the land, was engaged to do all the farm-work, to keep up the fires in the School heating-apparatus, to make the gas, wash and peel the potatoes, and see to the pigs, for the not very extravagant remuneration of 13s. a week, with the prospect of a bonus of a sovereign at the end of the year, if he should prove "entirely satisfactory."

Little praise can be bestowed upon the dietary of the period, which does not seem to have improved with the Education. That it was plain is the best that can be said of it. "Food?" writes an old scholar of the time, in reply to a question on the subject. "Food? Don't speak of it!" However, the picture he proceeds to draw represents much the same fare as was seen on the tables of ten or fifteen years later. For breakfast there was bread and milk. For dinner, on five days of the week, there was meat, of good quality. "But the puddings," declares the authority quoted above; "The puddings gave me a distaste which I retain to this day; especially a species of suetty stuff with a few plums that had fallen in by mistake, and that was popularly called"—well, perhaps, on reflection, the not very attractive name is better forgotten. At supper, as the half-past five o'clock meal was called, there was bread, with cheese or treacle—rarely butter—and water.

Even the teachers were, it is said, sometimes kept on very short commons indeed. One of them assured the writer that, for want of sufficient food, he was actually in the habit of going down into the Long Garden during the morning recess, to pull and eat a raw turnip! He was at length caught red-handed by Joseph Stephens, the gardener. But the kind-hearted old man saw plainly enough what was the matter when he looked at the culprit's face, and recognised how ill and weak he was. "What," said he; "eating a frosted turnip? Come with me." He brought the half-starved youth before Ann Frank. She promptly sent for Dr Wade. A greatly improved dietary was ordered for



the young turnip-stealer, and he was soon restored to health.

Clothing was still provided by the Institution; and as each boy and girl received an entirely new rig-out at the time of the General Meeting, the scholars then appeared in uniform. Corduroy trousers were beginning to go out of fashion; but the boys still had collarless jackets of orthodox Quaker cut. Linen collars were worn, but not neck-ties. Nor had the boys any artificial covering for their heads, except during walks and on Sundays, "when a big basket of hats was brought in, and they were served out as fairly as could be managed." The fashion of wearing night-caps was not then obsolete. "Each night, as we went to bed," writes a scholar of the time, "a basket of them was carried round the bed-rooms for such boys as liked to wear them, to take one and put it on." All the girls still wore Friends' bonnets, at least when they went to Meeting. In 1851 the lists of clothing were revised; and the table of girls' requisites, which now for the first time included gloves, finished up with "1 Umberella."

There were three more or less serious outbreaks of illness during this period. There were two visitations of scarlet fever, in 1848 and in 1853. On the second occasion the attack was confined to the girls' wing. Measles appeared in 1851, and spread extensively, lasting for some months. The cases, both of measles and scarlet fever, were mostly slight, according to the records, and all the children recovered. But in 1851 Margaret Gregory, of Street, the senior apprentice in the Girls' School, died of inflammation of the lungs, to the deep regret of all who knew her. She was buried in the adjoining graveyard; "and well do I remember," writes Sir Richard Tangye, "Mary Tanner's beautiful address at the grave-side. She spoke from the text 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,' and there were few dry eyes among those present."

The general verdict of scholars of the time tends to show

that the tone of the Institution was not a high one for morals, or government or teaching. All three were, however, probably better than in many other schools of the period. And while the Superintendents, and some at least of the teachers, were conscientiously striving to do their full duty by those entrusted to their charge, there were scholars who nobly responded, and whose influence was such that it has been spoken of as the salvation of the School. Discipline on the boys' side, which had deteriorated under the previous administration, at first improved under the rule of John Frank. In the autumn of 1847, when he had been in office only ten months, the Committee commented with satisfaction on the "Improvement in General Conduct and Moral Tone." It is to be feared, however, that the improvement was largely superficial. In December 1848 the Committee were engaged for a long time in personally investigating a serious moral trouble, so widely spread that "most of the boys" were implicated. The authorities decided that it was "necessary for the moral purification of the School" that four of the most flagrant offenders should be expelled; while nine others were to be punished "in the manner now suggested, and left to the discretion of the Master." The names of the four were placed on the Minutes of the Committee; but some later hand has, with merciful kindness, carefully erased them, and their memory survives only in the recollections of their school-fellows.

A gloomy picture of the state of the School towards the close of this period has been drawn by an old scholar who, as one of the youngest boys, was, as he says, subjected to brutal tyranny by some of his older companions, and on whose memory the hard treatment he received has left a mark that will never be erased. Nor were his troubles due solely to the action of his school-fellows. "There was a great hardship," he writes, "in the coldness of the rooms in winter; I almost freeze at the thought of them. The school-rooms were supposed to be warmed by hot air coming in through gratings

from a heating-apparatus in a distant cellar. Either the apparatus was inadequate, or there was an unjustifiable economy of fuel. Directly school was over, or when we came in from a walk, the big boys would crowd round these gratings and try to warm their fingers, but a small boy had no chance of getting near them. I never like to think of that long, dreary winter of 1848-1849. The impression left is of an utter chilliness and dismalness such as I hope no school-boy experiences now.

"I vividly remember one walk in particular, in a biting, frosty east wind, on the Moor below Axbridge. Another boy and I, chilled to the bone, had straggled behind the rest; and in our misery, talking over all that we had to go through at School, and looking forward to all the long months ahead, that, to our childish minds seemed as ages, we came to the decision that life under such conditions was not worth living, and that, rather than make the exertion to overtake the rest of the School, we would at once end our troubles by throwing ourselves into the Axe.

"I hardly know what restrained us, at the last moment; possibly some thought of the trouble which the act would cause to those dear to us, at the homes from which we had been so long separated; but so it was that we were mercifully held back upon the very brink.

"I should not wish it to be thought that there were no bright and sunny days. Some of the worst characters left during that year, and the long winter gave way at last to spring and cheerful sunshine. There was always the charm of walks in that beautiful country. There were the Excursions to Cheddar and Black Down and Woodspring Priory. There were football and the flying of kites on Callow; the search for potato-stones on Sandford Hill; the endless interest of a School garden; the freshness of School friendships, continuing ever green through the long years intervening. Time is a great consoler. In the end, the brighter touches had so veiled the earlier shadows that, when the

time came for me to leave Sidcot for a distant School, it was long before I was reconciled to the change.

"One rare privilege we had, in those far-off days; a privilege to which no words can do justice; and that was in the tender, appealing ministry of Mary Tanner, Sunday after Sunday, which must surely have made a deep, ineffaceable impression on the young listeners, telling on all their after-lives."

Corporal punishment was rarely resorted to during this period; and the "Boxes for the solitary confinement of refractory boys," although they still existed, were probably not used. During John Veale's brief tenure of office, however, the Committee "discovered that a small enclosure" had been made "in one of the bed-rooms, for the purpose of confining boys as a punishment"—a black-hole, in fact; and they requested the Head-master "to have it immediately removed." But if the cane and the cell were no longer the ordinary instruments of correction, there were other methods of barbarism equally severe. It is remembered of one boy, admittedly "terribly provoking and obstinate," that he was made "to stand all school-time for a week, and that he was debarred from all play-time and all conversation":—a cruel punishment, which, alas! was in vogue long afterwards, although perhaps never again to such an almost incredible degree.

For ordinary breaches of the regulations the penalties would seem, from a description written at the time, to have been slight indeed. "The boys," wrote one of John Frank's scholars shortly after leaving Sidcot, "are divided into four classes, according to the number of (bad) marks they get; the first class having certain privileges that the others have not, sometimes going walks and excursions when the others are not allowed to; the second class having advantages over the third, and so on. Sometimes, instead of marks, we had to sit at our desks without talking, or to stand at the head of the school-room with our hands behind us."



The actual effect of this system, however, was that some high-spirited boys, still remembered by their school-fellows as having had a particularly good influence in the School, were sometimes, for very trivial faults, confined to bounds for weeks at a time.

All Sidcot scholars have numbers, which are used in marking their personal or temporary property, but are not now employed in any other way. But in John Frank's day the boys were known to the authorities by their numbers only. By their comrades, on the other hand, they were distinguished by nicknames. "The number 9 of my day," writes an old scholar, "was 'Dinky,' and it was months before I discovered that this Cornish boy had any other name at all. I do not remember hearing him once called by either Christian name or surname, by the powers or by his school-fellows."

Pocket-money, which was all taken charge of by the Headmaster, was doled out weekly, and might be spent at shops in Axbridge. Two envoys, armed with a well-censored list and provided with a basket, were despatched on Saturday afternoons to the sleepy little town. "I was once sent over," writes an old scholar, "with a boy I had had some silly quarrel with. We walked on opposite sides of the road for a bit. Finally we gave in, and became good friends before we reached home. Oh! but it was cold that winter day. I remember that the hand which had grasped the basket-handle was so cramped and numbed that I cried with the pain of the thawing before a cottage fire on the way back."

A very important improvement, in John Frank's time, was the construction of the first swimming-bath, which was paid for by subscription, and which was finished soon after the April General Meeting of 1849. This bath, which was meant for the boys,—“the providing of similar accommodation for the girls will receive the further consideration of the Committee”—was immediately outside the wall at the north-west corner of the boys' playground. It was not covered, but there were dressing-sheds at each end of it, much used



in summer by nesting swallows. It was a small affair, about forty feet long, fifteen feet wide, four feet deep at the deeper end, and about a foot at the other. The supply of water was very inadequate—all that the School got came through a three-quarter inch pipe—and, sometimes, indeed, failed altogether, so that, by the end of the season, if the weather had been warm, the bath was as green as a horse-pond, while its stagnant waters were tenanted by swarms of beetles, rowing-flies and water-boatmen.

The washing-accommodation in the School-building itself was at this time little better than it had been in the dark days of thirty years before. There were ten basins, in a stone-paved room on the ground floor, and in these the boys washed in relays of ten. Water was, however, very limited in quantity, and the means of drying were more limited still, for there were only five roller towels. The condition of those towels when the last set were ready to use them may be imagined. "The result to me," writes an old scholar, "was a perpetual cold in the head, and a chronic deafness which has never been shaken off."

Owing partly to the high price of provisions and of coal, and partly to the small number of boys and girls in the School, the cost per head during this period was high, compared with that of former years. In 1847, each of the sixty-one scholars cost the institution £25, 2s. 7d. At the General Meeting of 1853 there were fifty-nine scholars, and the average cost was £28, 13s. 10d.; and at that of 1854—the greater part of the year having been under Martin Lidbetter's rule—when the number of scholars had fallen to fifty-six (thirty-one boys and twenty-five girls), the average cost reached the high figure of £33, 5s. 6d. It must not be forgotten, however, that the School then provided and mended, free of charge to parents, clothing of all descriptions, including boots and shoes, and also paid the major part of the children's travelling expenses.

It is interesting to compare some of the details of the

expenses of half a century ago with those of more modern times. In 1847 food cost £10, 2s. 1d., and salaries and wages together, £5, 6s. 3d. per head. In 1853 the amounts spent on these two important items were £12, 9s. 11d. and £8, 3s. 2d. At the present day food costs about £10, and salaries and wages about £22 per head; that is to say, that although the cost of food per head is the same as it was sixty years ago, the staff has been so increased, and the quality of the teaching so improved, that salaries have increased four-fold.

The annual subscriptions, which in the first year of the period were £291, had sunk to £219 by the end of it. The revenue from the Bridgwater Estate, on the other hand, continued to increase, and in 1854 the gross return was £419. A curious feature in the accounts of the time is the large number of entries of things new and old which were disposed of, either to oblige Friends or others living near, or with the view of making a little money. Thus we have notes of sums received for old clothes, old bedsteads, old casks, old bottles; for pork and vegetables and other items, down to a shilling's-worth of steel pens, a shilling's-worth of gas-tar, and four-pennyworth of oats.

In 1852 the Surrey Canal Bonds, in which Dr Pope's £2000 had been sunk, and which had turned out such an unfortunate investment for the School, were at last disposed of. They realised £1820, or 91 per cent. of their original value; and it was decided that the money should be devoted to paying off some of the now heavy debt. At the same time most of the remaining creditors agreed to accept four per cent. for their loans, instead of five.

At the January Committee in 1847, a proposition, similar to one made in 1810, was agreed to, namely, to admit, when the School was not full, "at such price as shall at least be equal to the average cost . . . children being members of our Society, or either of whose parents is a member, or being orphans under the guardianship of a member of our Society, whose view is to train them up as Friends." At the same time

it was decided that children should in future be allowed to remain until the age of fifteen without the special application which so far had been necessary, the original age-limit having been fourteen. A few years later it was further agreed that "children resident beyond the limits of the Associated Meetings" should be eligible for admission. The number of scholars rose in consequence; and in 1851 the girls' side contained its full complement of forty girls, for the first time in the history of the Institution. The numbers rapidly fell again, however, and three years later there were only twenty-five girls in the School.

A minor point connected with finance was settled in 1852. The Institution had evidently been put to much expense and inconvenience on account of its many visitors; and by a Minute of the Committee, "Relations of children in the School, and other Friends," were requested "not unnecessarily to make the School a visiting house." At the same time a very moderate table of charges was drawn up, to be paid by all visitors;—with exceptions, such as when parents brought children to School for the first time, or in cases of illness. No new property was acquired during this period; and, in fact, the Institution parted with one field, an outlying pasture called Twynnard's Mead, measuring about an acre and a half, which was sold in 1850 for £60. Two important changes in the constitution of the Committee date from 1853. In the first place, the number of Friends on that body was increased to twelve,—eight men and four women—with the object of securing a better attendance; and, secondly, "with the view of encouraging mutual confidence and co-operation," the Head-master was to be invited to attend a large part of each meeting of the Committee.

The state of the School, as measured by the small number of scholars in it, and as disclosed in other ways, led to the appointment, at the General Meeting of 1853, of a sub-committee "to visit Sidcot and some other schools, and to make a full report on the former, as to its adaptations and

arrangements for maintaining the health and comfort of all its inmates, and for the moral training and general education of the children." This Committee, consisting of sixteen Friends, all of them men, presented to the adjourned General Meeting, held in Bristol four months later, a long report, a portion of which occupies nine closely-written foolscap pages of the Minute-book. They proposed a number of reforms; and their strictures on the want of order and cleanliness which they noticed among the scholars suggest a very unsatisfactory condition of affairs. They called for improvements in the washing accommodation,—more basins, more water, more towels. They recommended that the girls' dining-room should be floored with wood instead of stone, that new offices should be provided, that double windows should be made for the sick-room, and that there should be more new desks, both for girls and boys. They expressed the hope that the officers of the Institution would be "more alive" to the importance of "good manners, neatness, and cleanliness of appearance, and that the recurrence of so much disorder" would be prevented.

The Committee reported that "the educational department" would bear favourable comparison with that of other schools of the same description, but they suggested several improvements. They proposed the appointment of paid scientific lecturers, from which they anticipated the happiest results. In the words of the Report,

"The laboratory, now neglected and almost useless, would then become a source of interest and instructive amusement. The general taste and intellectual impulse of the scholars would be refined and elevated; a purer relish for the true and beautiful in the wonders revealed by modern science and discovery, though only their threshold might be touched, would produce (in some minds at any rate), an improved moral tone. Energy, cheerfulness and increased zest for the ordinary routine of elementary learning, as ancillary to the higher branches, might fairly be anticipated as the result."



The introduction of French as a regular school subject was also recommended. The Head-master and the teachers "expressed themselves as quite willing to do their best in carrying such a scheme into effect," but modestly considered themselves "scarcely qualified to undertake it without a preparatory course of lessons." The appointment of a Drawing-master was also proposed, and it was suggested that the School should be periodically examined by a paid Inspector.

As it was clear that these changes would cost money, and as funds were very low already, a graduated scale of payments was proposed. It was suggested that children from the Associated Meetings should be admitted, according to individual circumstances, at £12, £16, and £18 a head; and that children from beyond these limits should pay £15, £18, and £21. The Committee, however, wished it to be clearly understood that they were anxious not "to exclude or render difficult the admission of 'the children of the poor, and those who cannot well afford to send them to other schools.'" With the idea of keeping out those whose influence might be detrimental, it was thought that a new question might be submitted to the Agents:—

"Have the previous habits or moral training of this child been such as to render him or her, in thy opinion, an unfit companion for other children at school?" This query was, however, not adopted. It was agreed to "substitute for it an additional instruction to Agents, in the form of advice."

As another means of providing funds, it was further recommended that, besides raising the rate of payment, the Committee of Management should be empowered to borrow money, or to sell part of the property of the Institution.

The report concluded with this striking passage:—

"The management of the property of the Institution, the apparatus of intellectual culture, the vigilance and care required in moral training and in the formation of orderly habits and good manners, the exercise of various qualifications in the managers and officers of such Institution are all,



it will be admitted, but means to an end of far higher importance the right direction of religious teaching, strictly so understood;—the aim to implant sound religious principle, and lead the minds of all within the household to a more full appreciation of the blessings of the Gospel; to exemplify and diffuse a spirit of love and meekness, of Christian sincerity and truth, with a healthful energy and earnestness of mind in pursuit of what is really permanent and really good. This we know is from above, yet we are commanded to use measures and ask a blessing.

“It is felt that what is really wanted, whatever plans of improvement may be devised or tried, is more singleness of heart in all concerned directly or indirectly with the School, under an abiding sense of His presence to ask the help and blessing of the Most High upon their efforts, without which we may be sure that all will be in vain.”

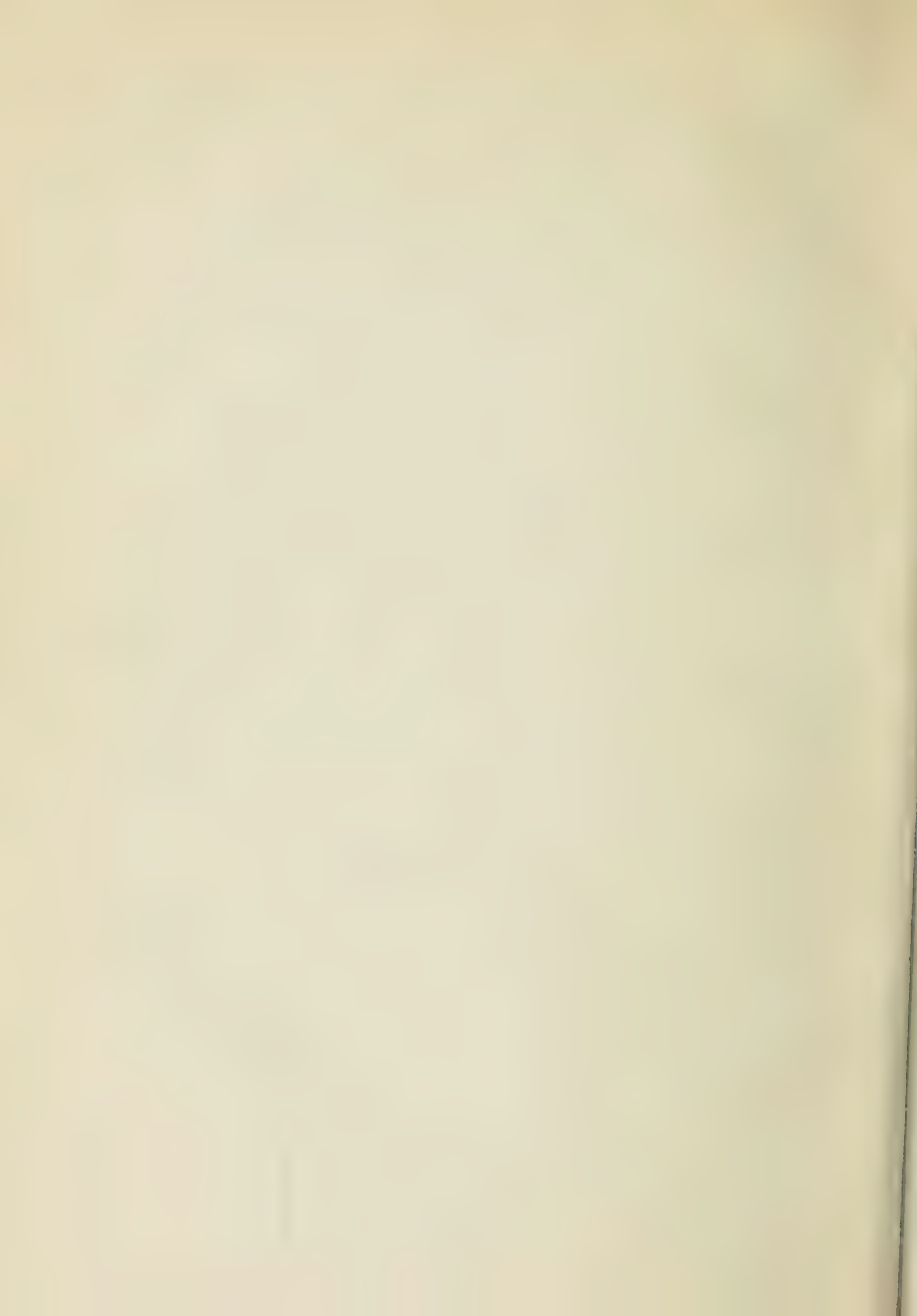
## CHAPTER VIII

HENRY DYMOND, 1854-1865

MORE than forty years have passed since Henry and Edith Dymond left Sidcot for the second time, never to return. And yet, to the writer of this History, their memory is greener, their personality more vivid than that of many who, long since their day, have been prominent figures in the School. They had left Sidcot thirty-three years before, in their hot youth, when George the Fourth was King. When they came back, the First Gentleman in Europe had gone to his account, the Sailor King was dead, and Queen Victoria had been on the throne seventeen years. When they went away, the stage-coach was in its glory, and the "Rocket" had not yet run its trial trip. When they came back the country was traversed by a network of railways, and the stage-coach had been driven from the road. They had lit their last candles at Sidcot by the aid of flint and steel and tinder-box. They came back to find gas and lucifer matches. When they left, a letter to London cost a shilling. When they returned, a letter could be sent from one end of the Island to the other for a penny. The telegraph of their young days was a tall pole with moving arms of wood, like a railway-signal. When they came to Sidcot again, the country was crossed by ten thousand miles of electric telegraph. The pens of 1821 were of the grey goose-quill; those of 1854 were of steel. When they left Sidcot Napoleon Buonaparte was dying at St Helena. When they came here again, the troops of his nephew were fighting side by side with the English, against the Czar of Russia.



Henry Dymond



They came back, not old indeed, but with the signs of late middle age deeply marked upon them. They were not really old when, eleven years later, they finally withdrew. They had not, even then, reached the limit of the Psalmist. But the health of both was broken by sickness and sorrow; and to the scholars, at any rate, they seemed an old and venerable pair. No one who was at Sidcot in Henry Dymond's day is likely to forget his beautiful white hair, his ruddy and smooth-shaven face, his snowy neck-cloth, his Quaker garb of unvarying black, and, above all, his kindly smile and his quiet, gentle, dignified bearing. Nor will anyone who ever heard it easily forget the low clear tones of his beautiful voice, in the Scripture Readings in the girls' school-room of those distant days. There are phrases, phrases chiefly in the Old Testament, which the writer can never read or even think of without recalling the sound of that silver tongue which has been silent for so many years: "Behold, I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite, with my sword and with my bow." "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Who is there, again, that does not remember the spare figure of the preacher, as he stood facing the Meeting, with a handkerchief of crimson silk in his hand, moving his arm slowly up and down, as if to gently emphasize the points of his discourse? It was an article of faith with us that he was more interested in the girls than in the boys, which, indeed, was only fair, considering the undoubted predilections of his consort. But to all alike his kindness was unvarying. And although he took little part in the teaching, his rare lessons being almost if not entirely on Biblical History, his genial influence was felt throughout the School. His pleasant smile and his gentle manner endeared him to both scholars and teachers; and the writer has reason to know that the white-haired Master of fifty years since is still remembered with reverence and affection.



Edith Dymond's personality, although very different, was quite as strongly marked. The ample proportions of "Mother Duck," as we irreverently styled her, were in singular contrast to the slight frame of her husband, whom, again, we never called anything but "Gaffer." Her rule was absolute. He would have been a bold rascal who dared to disobey her orders. No Sidcot boy of her day will ever forget her daily visitation, at breakfast-time, as she marched slowly up and down the dining-room, the famous bunch of keys jingling at her waist, and the dreaded note-book in her hand. Any boy who looked as if he needed doctoring, any boy without a collar, or with a button missing from his "gown,"—souvenir, perhaps, of a desperate charge at blackthorn the night before,—or with his hair untidy, or with his hands or face insufficiently washed, was sure to catch her eye, to have his number taken, and to be summoned to the "Surgery," after the Bible-reading in the girls' school-room, for exhortation, or treatment, or both, emphasized, perhaps, by half an hour's detention behind the surgery door. She carried the note-book into Meeting; and if any boy or girl coughed, never so slightly, we used to see, or think we saw, the movement of the ruthlessly recording pencil underneath her ample shawl. She used to carve for the middle section of the long dining-table; and her mere presence kept the young rascals near her as quiet as if Josiah Evans himself had been in charge. It was she who, when a new boy once ventured to send up his plate for a second helping, when only one was allowed, leaned forward to look at him, for he was on her own side of the table, and, holding her hands together much as if she had just caught a cricket-ball, said solemnly, "Number 39, dost thou not know that little boys' stomachs are only *so* big?"

She was an autocrat in many ways. Immediately in front of the School porch is a narrow path winding down past the weeping-ash tree, and giving on her own private and particular flower-garden, between the shrubbery and the old

laboratory—now the photographic room. This path was made under her directions, and was intended for her use alone. No one else, not even one of the Staff, so it was believed, was privileged to walk down it. Certainly no boy caught trespassing there would be likely to forget it. The box-edgings of the paths in the Long Garden — much broader and higher and more solid then—were her especial care and pride; and he was regarded as a desperado who dared her wrath by sitting down on one of them. Times have changed. "Mother Duck's" box-edgings are bereft of their ancient glory. Her sacred path has long since lost its name. Sidcot scholars of to-day call after someone else the ancient oak-tree that, in feeble age, still stands by the "Committee Friends," and which was known familiarly as "Gaffer" to the boys of half a century ago.

With all Edith Dymond's seeming severity, a most motherly heart beat in her broad breast. Nothing could have exceeded the vigilant and kindly care that she and her two able matrons took of the children, in every possible way. Like her husband, she had the best interests of both teachers and scholars at heart; and no officer of the School was ever more proud than she was of any distinction achieved by any one of her charge.

Henry Dymond's rule at Sidcot was, as regards his lieutenants, divided into two well-marked periods, widely different in character. During the earlier half of his administration, from 1854 to 1860, the active government on the boys' side was in the hands of men who, although conscientiously doing their duty according to their lights, attracted to themselves in very slight measure the personal regard of the scholars; and who, to use the words of one who knew them well, were "unsympathetic disciplinarians, lacking in tact, and with not much resource other than punishment." This state of affairs became strongly accentuated in 1858, when, in consequence of changes in the Staff, still severer methods came into vogue. Several of the

masters were in the habit of striking the boys, and especially of boxing their ears—a most dangerous and reprehensible practice—“frequently on very small provocation.” It is remembered that once, when a master struck one of his class in school-time, one of the older boys, one of the most orderly and best-behaved boys in the School, stood up at his place and protested, but to no purpose. Traditions of those dark days, and of the ruthless and yet comparatively impotent severity of “The Pig-driver,” survived until the writer’s time, when two years of rational government had restored order, and had done much to alter the old hard relations between teacher and taught.

A smouldering discontent, and a spirit of resentment against the existing state of things found vent, at length, in the Rebellion of 1859. Trifling as that outbreak seems, in looking back on it, the deeply-rooted character of the spirit of revolt that prompted it may be judged from the fact, that, although one conspirator, the biggest boy in the School, turned traitor at the last moment, and deserted to the enemy, the Barring-out was not only sanctioned but supported by the oldest, the most orderly, and the most honourable boys. The ringleaders contrived to keep their plans so well concealed that, although every boy in the School knew, long beforehand, the day and hour when the struggle was to begin, the authorities had no inkling at all of what was coming.

For twenty-four hours before the fateful moment, every boy had collected all the crusts of bread that he could lay his hands on. And after supper on the evening of Friday, the 22nd of October 1859—and one may guess how slowly the brief half-hour dragged itself by—the boys, instead of filing straight out into the playground, as the custom was, marched into the school-room—the northern half of the present dining-hall. Doors and windows were shut and fastened, and barricaded with desks and black-boards and anything else that was movable. And then, arming themselves

with fire-irons, map-rollers and hockey-sticks, the young rebels prepared to defend their fortress.

The masters, for their part, were prompt enough to attack. For a time victory was with the garrison. All attempts to force the doors failed, and a storming-party that had tried to get in through the small square window between the now-vanished passage and the school-room was beaten off, amid cheers of defiance and derision. But the window was the weak point. Close by the old study door there hung a ladder, often used in the recovery of balls from the lower roofs of the School buildings. Employing this as a battering-ram, the teachers made another and more determined attack. The window gave way. The great desk that had been dragged against it, and the barricade of black-boards, came down with a crash, and the stormers poured through into the school-room. The siege had lasted ten minutes. The garrison, who had expected to be able to hold out for a week, opened the farther door and made for the top of the playground, where, formed in a half-circle with their backs to the wall, the big boys in front and the small ones in the rear, they defied their victorious pursuers.

The second master, who had been the most prominent officer in the whole business, and who, by the way, had sustained some smart raps over the knuckles during the fight, called out to the mutineers, "Boys! go to your desks!" But the only answer was a cheer. Then he made a speech. "I remember," writes one who was in the thick of it all, "I remember the words he used, as if it were yesterday instead of fifty years ago":—"Now, boys! go to your places! I promise you that those who go shall have no punishment." On the faith of this proclamation the rebels gave in, and marched back into the school-room, one of the junior masters harassing the rear, and collaring such boys as he could, who, however, were promptly rescued by their comrades.

The promise of amnesty, like many a similar promise, was not kept. During the next three days there was no play-



time at all, and very little time was allowed for meals. The only food on the breakfast-table, on the day after the fight, consisted of the dry crusts which the mutineers had hoarded up for the siege, and which the teachers had collected from the desks when the boys had gone to bed. No more bread was allowed until these had been all eaten.

Foolish as the plans of the rebels were, and ignominious as was the end of the Rebellion, the authorities could hardly help seeing that there had been genuine grounds for discontent. Conditions of life were altered for the better. "Not one of the teachers ever again laid violent hands upon a scholar," while the most obnoxious of them now made himself, until he left, as agreeable as he had previously been the reverse.

It is possible that if, instead of attacking the fortress, the masters had been content to sit down and wait, they would have saved themselves some trouble and a few hard knocks. The lot of fifty boys, shut up in a room with no provisions but dry bread, and with nothing but the bare boards to sleep on, would not have been a very happy one; and it may be safely argued that a blockade would have answered quite as well as a siege.

At the summer of 1860, with the advent of Josiah Evans as first class teacher, and of the popular second in command, William Kitching, the old order changed. In the strong and capable hands of "Old Jos," as the new chief was called, not only were the reins of government drawn tight, not only was discipline re-established, but a tone and a spirit were introduced into the School, which, in the opinion of the writer, have never since been surpassed.

The writer has often heard descriptions of the new teacher's first day of command; how he marched into the dining-room—who will ever forget that stately stride?—where the boys, awaiting the order to take their seats, were standing carelessly, and talking and laughing; how he dealt out punishments right and left, giving no warning—that fatal mistake of poor



disciplinarians—and showing no mercy. The culprits knew well enough that they were breaking rules, and could not complain if they were made to suffer for it.

A martinet Josiah Evans certainly was. Goldsmith's description fits him to a hair:—

“A man severe he was, and stern to view:  
I knew him well, and every truant knew,  
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face;  
Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he.”

But no less true of him are the lines that follow:—

“Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.”

For while he was strict, and sometimes even harsh in his discipline, severity was far from being his only method. His whole energy was bent on the advancement of his class. And did any boy, however low down, display any special aptitude for any study or art or craft, he was sure of Josiah Evans's encouragement; and if he stuck to his work, he was equally sure of praise and kindly interest. There can be no question that his methods were severe, sometimes very severe indeed; “but,” to quote the words of one of his best and most promising scholars, “the greatly increased liberty granted to the older boys, and the consequent new and grateful experience of being placed upon their honour, promptly developed a disposition to respond to the trust reposed in them; and the old antagonistic sentiment against a teacher because he was a teacher, although it did not disappear, became very much modified.”

Josiah Evans's influence was felt in every corner;—in the class-room, on the playground, in the workshop, in the cricket-field. He was not a good reader, but he thoroughly understood both the art and the teaching of it. He did not excel as a writer, but he trained some of the best writers that the School has ever known. He was not a good player at any

of our games, but he joined in not a few of them; and under his stirring encouragement every player who was worth his salt did the very best he could. Under his influence the Boys' Literary Society received a new lease of life, and began a vigorous career which, with some intermission in the eighties and nineties, has lasted to the present day. His lore of plants and insects and fossils, his keen interest in all scientific subjects, his many-sided knowledge always at the service of even the most insignificant scapegrace in the School, made the weekly walks a means of influencing the lives of many who were privileged to share them: and there can have been but few boys who, with such encouragement, acquired no taste for Natural History.

"His analyses of the character and conduct of the boys on 'breaking-up night' were masterly," writes a scholar of the time,—dating his letter of Reminiscences from the "Trans-Siberian Railway, 18 hours east of Irkutsk." "You will remember they were listened-to; how he stood by the teacher's desk in the middle of the schoolroom, and bestowed upon each boy in turn his meed of praise or blame for his doings in the half-year just closing. I think it must have helped the careless ones to mind their P's and Q's, knowing how their faults would be laid bare on these occasions. I think, too, that many a good boy must have gone to bed that night with his heart warmed, and with his determination to lead a noble life strengthened after listening to one of those speeches."

He took the greatest interest, too, in the Painting and Drawing, in which so many of his boys, under Theodore Compton's genial guidance, became more or less of experts. His favourite artistic dictum, "I think a wash of chrome would improve it," is remembered by many a grey-haired seignior. Never was class-room better kept than his was; well-polished desks, unsullied walls, spotless floor. His own desk was a proverbial chaos, in which he could seldom find anything he wanted. Many a boy's book, lost in those

cavernous depths by the Master himself, was paid for out of the scanty pocket-money of those days; and then, at the half-yearly Augean cleansing, recovered and returned, with no more apology than "This belongs to thee, I think." Every week the desks were cleaned and polished, and their internal arrangements scrutinised. And woe betide the unfortunate whose books were not in due order, or who had scratched the flawless lid of his desk, or who—Oh! crime of crimes!—had spilt a drop of ink upon the floor. Times have changed. The School has altered since his day. The class-room that was built for him is a class-room no longer:

"the very spot  
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot,"

But, in common with others, and they are many, who share his high estimate of Josiah Evans, the writer is quite aware that his old chief had his failings. "It would tax Shakespeare to set forth J. E. as he was, in his strength and weakness. He is almost as inscrutable as Hamlet. But Sidcot owes him much, and so do you and I and many another." He was inclined—as which of us is not?—to be procrastinating. His good intentions sometimes led him to promise more, in the way of lessons and lectures, than he was able to perform, a failing shared by many since his day. He could brook no opposition. Anything of the nature of discontent, however well-founded, aroused his determined, and, at times, even vindictive antagonism. And if he took a strong dislike to a boy, as he occasionally did, that boy's school career was not likely to be a happy one.

His was a remarkable figure—tall, spare, and angular. And his slight eccentricities, both of manner and costume, which, in a less prominent personage, would have passed unnoticed, will never be forgotten by any of his boys. Who does not remember the wide-awake hat, that, as it hung above his desk, was held in greater awe and kept better

order than all the other masters put together? Who is there that cannot recall his way of adjusting his spectacles, either at his desk, before reducing a culprit to confusion by some withering remark, or in the cricket-field, before delivering a ball whose unerring accuracy was likely to spread-eagle a hostile wicket? Has any scholar of the time forgotten those everlasting check trousers, much too tight and much too short, whose appearance always heralded the half-yearly excursion, and which were known in our school-boy slang as "Jossy's Nursion Breeches"?

There can be no doubt that Josiah Evans was fortunate in his material. And although it is certainly true that he succeeded in developing among his boys a love of good work, a zeal for play, and a spirit of manly independence such as can have characterised few periods in the annals of the School, it is equally true that there has seldom been so much character among the leaders of the first class as there was towards the close of his mastership. It has always seemed to the writer, from that time to this, remembering the clever mathematicians, the faultless writers, the able elocutionists, the brilliant essayists, the keen cricketers, the enthusiastic naturalists of that Halcyon Age, that there were indeed giants in those days.

While there were four teachers in the boys' wing during the greater part of Henry Dymond's reign, there were, for some time, owing to the small number of girls, only three on the other side of the house. When Eliza Ferris, who afterwards married Henry Barron Smith, left in 1856, there was much difficulty in finding anyone to fill her place. One teacher who was appointed in that year only stayed a fortnight, and her successor only occupied the post for two months. The effect of this unsettlement is reflected in the Report of William Pengelley, who examined the School in 1857; and who, although he pronounced the state of the boys' education to be quite satisfactory, found that "the girls have suffered somewhat for want of adequate teaching."



In 1857, however, the appointment of Martha Ecroyd Smith, afterwards so widely and honourably known as the Head of a school at Southport, restored order on the girls' side; and, under her rule, good work was done for several years.

Under the government of Henry Dymond and his lieutenants the standard of Education at Sidcot was greatly raised. The most striking proof of this is to be found in the fact that, in December, 1858, three boys, John R. Penrose, Robert Willmot and Edward Withy, passed the Cambridge Junior Local Examination, held in Bristol. All three satisfied the Examiners in what were then the compulsory subjects—namely, Reading, Dictation, Analysis and Parsing, Arithmetic, Geography, English History and Religious Knowledge. One of them satisfied the Examiners in French—then recently made a regular School subject—and in Pure Mathematics, one in French and Mechanics and Hydrostatics, and one in Pure Mathematics and Mechanics and Hydrostatics;—a record highly honourable to the School of half a century ago.

Under the scheme of Education during the latter half of the period the boys' first class devoted a good deal of time to English subjects, including Grammar, both according to Lindley Murray and to Morrell, with plenty of Parsing and a little Analysis; History, chiefly confined to the learning of Dates; Geography, of which Josiah Evans was very fond, and which sometimes formed the chief lesson for days together; and Spelling and Definitions and Derivations, partly from Butter's "Spelling," and partly from the then indispensable Ackworth Vocabulary. Spelling was regarded then as an art well worth cultivating, and there were boys in the School who seldom or never made a mistake. The Mathematics comprised a thorough drilling in Arithmetic, from the simplest Rules to the most advanced, Mensuration, Algebra to Quadratic Equations, and the first three Books of Euclid. The father of the Senior Wrangler of 1905 reached the Sixth Book, and also made excursions into Trigonometry and the higher Rules



of Algebra. Latin was confined to Cæsar's "Commentaries," and to exercises in Henry's First Latin Book. For the latter, however, there were substituted, at a later period, parts I., II. and IV. of Smith's "Principia Latina." In French the translation book in the early sixties was Voltaire's "Charles XII.," while the grammar was the familiar red-bound work of De Fivas.

"One thing I am clear about," writes one who knew the School well at this period: "the high moral ideals and examples set before us, and the thoroughness of the comparatively low education of the time."

Some attention was paid to Elementary Science. Henry Dymond, the masters and others gave Lectures on such subjects as Astronomy, Pneumatics, and Animal and Vegetable Physiology. In the latter fifties the older boys were allowed to practise in the laboratory, which, however, was very inadequately provided; and there was no instruction of any sort. Lessons were given in class on the properties of Air and Water, and on practical applications of Mechanics, for which there was then an excellent set of working models. A good deal of scientific knowledge was also incidentally imparted by Josiah Evans, in the course of lessons nominally on other subjects. His Lectures on Chemistry are specially remembered; most of all, no doubt, by boys who were privileged to assist in preparing the experiments. One such youthful chemist, having on one occasion filled a bladder with a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen, for use at a lecture, put a match to the saucer in which he had blown some trial soap-bubbles. The flame ran up the tube. There was a tremendous explosion. The experimenter was blown across the laboratory, and sat for a minute against the wall, half-stunned with the concussion, and hugging the ruins of the bladder. Another catastrophe happened in the dark-room, where some spilt collodion caught fire, causing a conflagration which in a few minutes reduced the entire room, whose walls were of brown paper, to a smouldering heap of ashes.

But by far the most conspicuous influence in scientific instruction at this time was that of Edmund Wheeler, who first visited the School in a professional capacity in 1855, and who subsequently came many times, sometimes staying for a day or two, and giving two or even three lectures to the whole School on Electricity, the Telegraph, the Atlantic Cable, Sound, Light, Heat, the Steam Engine, Insect Life and other subjects of interest. Few episodes in the School life of the period gave so much pleasure as these entertainments. Edmund Wheeler was a master of his art. His experiments never failed. His keenly intellectual expression and his bright eyes, his clear explanations and his racy anecdotes, made him the idol of his audience. No one who was privileged to see it will forget the lecturer's inimitable wink, after drinking coffee that was apparently boiling hot, but which, by repeated applications of cold water to the closed flask containing it, and the consequent diminution of pressure, had been reduced to a perfectly harmless temperature.

The increased scientific spirit of the time made itself felt in various ways. Scholars of the period still remember the interest that was taken in the launch of the *Great Eastern*, and in the laying of the first and short-lived Atlantic Cable, accounts of which were read to the boys from the *Morning Star*, whose editor was the Head-master's son, Alfred Dymond; and how the whole School assembled on the playground, night after night, to watch Donati's magnificent and never-to-be-forgotten Comet.

Sidcot boys and girls of to-day know much more Science than did their predecessors of fifty years ago. But there were two important subjects of instruction to which far more time and care were devoted in those more leisurely days. Writing, under Josiah Evans, was a fine art. Slates, not note-books, were used for school-work; and "hand-writing," to quote the words of the best writer of the time, "was not ruined as it is to-day." A wholesome rivalry was kept up by means of monthly competitions called "Specimens,"

in which all the boys wrote, from the same copy,—usually written on a long wall black-board by one of the scholars, the best penman of the period—lines of large, text, round and small hand, with figures. The books were then arranged in order of merit; so that a boy in one of the lower classes, who was a good writer, had a chance of being, in that subject, the top of the School.

Reading aloud was another accomplishment to which great attention was paid by Josiah Evans; and some at least, whose powers were developed and cultivated by his skilful methods, will never lose the taste he gave them for Cowper's Poems, or for Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." Much was done in the same direction by the half-yearly Recitations, held in the girls' school-room, and to which Friends of the neighbourhood were invited.

Not only were these Recitations prepared with very great care, but the knowledge of the poetry learnt for each special occasion was kept up by the hours devoted at the end of every half, for a night or two before the vacation, to Capverse, a form of entertainment which seems mild in comparison with the Musical Recitals of more modern times, but to which many a Sidcot boy and girl looks back with gratitude as having helped to store the memory and to give a readiness in apt quotation.

Music and Singing were still practically unknown. But although no musical instruments, other than whistles and jew's-harps, were allowed for some years after this period, Singing was no longer regarded as savouring of the Evil One. Those were the days of the great struggle between the Northern and Southern States of America; and it may have been the interest roused in this country by that tremendous conflict that familiarized us with "Tramp, tramp, tramp," and other songs connected with the War, as well as with "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower," "Camptown Races," and "Poor Uncle Ned." For a short time during the War there stayed in the School one of the Head-master's relatives, a man who had

been an officer in the Northern Army, and who had greatly distinguished himself, having taken a Confederate standard with his own hand. His martial bearing, his sun-burnt features and his tales of fighting made a great impression on the scholars, whom he assured that a battle was nothing but a game, and that only one man in ten was ever hit by a bullet;—really a high percentage, small though it seemed to us.

Such was the attitude of the authorities of the time towards Music that although one of the boys' teachers was a fine singer, and possessed a guitar and a concertina, his talents, owing no doubt to the ruling of the Committee or of the Head-master, were carefully concealed. The writer of these pages has seen a letter written by one of the Staff in the early sixties describing how he had spent an evening at Mary Tanner's house, and how astonished he had been when one of his own colleagues, whose accomplishments in this direction he had never even suspected, sang some beautiful Irish Songs, accompanying himself with a guitar.

Physical training, on which so much care and time are now expended, received in those days practically no attention. The only appliances provided by the School were a Horizontal Bar and a pair of Parallel Bars; and although the former of these was, at times, very popular, no lessons of any kind were given, until the last year of the period, when some use was made of Drilling-clubs.

Both sides of the house were regularly examined by William Pengelley, who, during this period, received, in recognition of his contributions to Geology, and especially of his Exploration of Kent's Cavern, the honour of the Fellowship of the Royal Society. William Pengelley's reports were almost always laudatory. An exception in the case of the girls, in 1857, has already been alluded to. Two years earlier he had found fault with the boys, whose Reading, he said, "continues to exhibit the same defect, an unpleasant 'tone,'—which has heretofore been complained of." Next year the objectionable tone had disappeared, and the reading was



pronounced to be very much improved. William Pengelley's periodical visits were by no means regarded with apprehension. To both teachers and scholars they were stimulating; and as a scholar of the time has assured the writer, "his original character added to our enjoyment." Another old scholar remembers the Examinations as "quite exciting times," and describes how the Examiner thought nothing of vaulting over a desk that happened to be in the way.

In 1863 the scholars were examined by Messrs Baxter and Davis, British School Inspectors. Their Report was favourable, and they added to it some useful suggestions. One was that elementary Algebra should be taught to the boys' second class, and elementary Geometry to the first class of girls. Their recommendation that Latin should be taught in the boys' second class seems to show that a similar proposal, made by the School Committee, in 1857, had not been acted upon, or had not long remained in operation.

The School examinations of this period were very different from those in use to-day. At the end of each half a multitude of questions were drawn up, all of which were set to all the School. Boys were expected to answer questions, not only on their own work, but on that of all the other classes. Thus, a boy in the first class, in Arithmetic, for example, had to work through all the rules, a task that occupied several days. In Geography, again, he would be expected to answer questions on all the countries of the world. The work was done on slates; and the teachers spent their whole time, while the examination lasted,—some four or five weeks,—in going round correcting the answers, as fast as they were written.

"The old style of examination," writes an old scholar, now Professor of English Literature in the University of Tokio, had a great deal to recommend it. "I have had a pretty large experience of examinations since, especially during the last twelve years. I think I looked through 7000 papers the last year I was in London, examining for London University,



for the London County Council, for the College of Preceptors, for the Society of Arts, and for the Institute of Civil Engineers, so that I think I have some title to speak. And I mean to say that the old examination of Josiah Evans's devising has never been beaten, so far as I know, as a stimulus, all the time it lasted. One splendid thing about it was that it made it necessary for the boys in the higher classes to keep up their knowledge of what they had learnt in the lower, or at least to revise it for examination use. It also stimulated boys in the lower classes to anticipate a little the subjects studied in the upper. Then the placing of the whole School in order of merit in each subject was very effective."

The General Meeting of half a century ago appears to have been a much more important factor in School politics than it is to-day; and it was, indeed, the most prominent feature in the year. It began on the third Tuesday in April, and it extended, as at present, over two days. But those days were closely filled; and while the Meeting lasted the premises and precincts were crowded with visitors. Many Friends came to Sidcot on the Saturday, and the Committee always mustered strong on the Sunday and Monday. The chief feature of the proceedings, as far as the scholars were concerned, was the public examination of the classes, partly by the teachers, and partly by Friends who had been nominated at an earlier sitting of the General Meeting. Examination papers, moreover, had been previously set to the two upper classes on each side; and the answers to these papers were discussed and criticised by the examining committees and others. Scripture was regarded as the most important subject; and the public examination on Biblical History and on Quaker Doctrine usually lasted an hour. An attempt was made to put the scholars through their paces in most of the subjects in their Curriculum; but Reading, Spelling, and Mental Arithmetic were always especially popular with the visitors. The best mathematicians among the boys usually demonstrated a proposition or two of Euclid; and paragraphs

from Cæsar's "Commentaries" and from Voltaire's "Charles XII." were read and translated.

The criticisms of these amateur examiners were sometimes a source of amusement to those who were being examined, and to whom the ceremony was always more or less of an ordeal. On one occasion an elderly Friend, who had been a schoolmaster, and who was therefore, perhaps, more ready with questions than some of his colleagues, and thus took a leading part in the examination, found fault with the boys' Reading. His own enunciation, however, was not of the clearest, and his criticism ran thus :—

"The firth clath read ath if they'd got bread-and-butter in their mouthth."

He himself certainly did. He was known for years as "Bread-and-Butter," nor did the writer, while at School, ever hear him called by any other name.

Examinations were, however, but a small part of the functions of the General Meeting, which expected to be consulted on all important points of School management, being, according to the Constitution, the actual governing body, with entire control both of Finance and Education. The General Meeting of 1854, for instance, recorded in a Minute its disapproval of the Committee's having spent so much money on permanent improvements, "which it trusts will not occur again."

When Henry Dymond came to Sidcot the four classes of boys were all taught in one room, the old school-room, the northern half of the present dining-hall, although what was then the dining-room, now the southern half of the dining-hall, was available as a class-room for part of the day. This ancient place of study was a dreary room. The sun never shone into it, except for a short time on early summer mornings. Its windows were so high up that only the sky was visible through their wire-covered panes. Its bare walls were unrelieved by a single picture. A similar state of things prevailed on the girls' side, and in both cases the difficulties

of teaching must have been great indeed, although trifling compared with those at Eton, where, at the same period, two classes, each numbering seventy or more, were taught in one room, divided only by a curtain.

In 1854 George Thomas, for five and twenty years the Treasurer to the Committee, and distinguished for his many striking acts of generosity to the School, provided a play-room for the girls, at a cost of more than £300; and this room was used to some extent as a class-room. In the same year the girls' dining-room, which had originally been paved with stone, was floored with wood. It was not until 1857 that a similar improvement was effected on the boys' side; the stone flooring of both school-room and dining-room being in that year removed, and the flags arranged at the bottom of the playground, where, in frosty weather, they were found very convenient for pouring down water for slides. In 1861 the boys' first class-room, long known as "The Class-room," and now forming part of the masters' common-room, was built. In the same year, at the north end of the playing-shed,—moved, in 1854, with the boys' offices, from the top of the playground to the eastern side, close to the road, on a space now occupied by class-rooms,—were built a play-room, usually known as the boys' room, a workshop, and a dark room for photographers, of whom there were a few, even in those primitive days of wet plates and heavy cameras, and whose brown-paper studio had been destroyed by fire, some years before. The cost of these improvements, which, including a lathe for the workshop, and new desks for the class-room, amounted to close on £300, was covered by subscription. The extra accommodation thus provided was, naturally, of the greatest service; and it was now possible, on the boys' side, at any rate, to have a separate room for each class.

The ground on which the shed and other buildings were erected in 1854 had formerly been occupied by the boys' gardens, and these were now removed to their present site—

a piece of land which, before that time, had formed part of the garden of Rose Cottage.

In Henry Dymond's day there were fifty-eight uniform square plots, one for every boy in the School. Gardening operations usually began on Good Friday, when those who were interested in such simple horticulture as was then practised at Sidcot weeded their small domains, dug-up and re-arranged their few perennials, and perhaps sowed some seeds.

The variety of plants in cultivation in those days was small. Two shrubs, Rosemary and Boy's Love, were highly prized, and he was a happy gardener who owned one of these old-world favourites, whose aromatic fragrance seems still fresh, after close on fifty years. In addition to these and to a few very hardy annuals, ferns from East Well Lane and Burrington, were much grown, or at least much planted; and among the clumps of hart's-tongue or *blechnum* were often concealed jam-pots full of water, in which newts and beetles might be induced to stay for a day or two. Rockeries, too, were very popular; less, perhaps, for the sake of growing plants in their crevices, than for the construction of grottoes,—decorated with potato-stones of price from Sandford, or with cherished fossils from Callow,—in which to keep captive toads or slow-worms.

Some boys, again, whose tastes did not run so much to gardening proper, dug diminutive cellars, in which to store bottles of liquorice-water, or water to which a few pieces of surreptitiously-acquired rhubarb-stalk had imparted a weird and questionable flavour, and which it was hoped might, by prolonged burial in the ground—say for a week or even ten days—become transmuted into nectar of surpassing strength and sweetness.

Another much-needed and most beneficial change was in the water-supply. The original lead pipe, only three-quarters of an inch in diameter, had proved very inadequate. It was early discovered that it did not furnish enough to fill



the swimming-bath; and in 1854 an attempt was made, by using spare rain-water from the roof, to make up the deficiency. In 1855 new cast-iron pipes, of one and three-quarter inch bore, were substituted for the smaller pipe of lead. At the same time additional trenches were dug round the spring, and 50 yards of stone-ware piping were put down, in order to collect more water. The School authorities agreed to supply water to Oakridge, to Sidcot Farm, and also, when those two houses could not spare it, to the cottage which has since been converted into a Convalescent Home. In 1860 the field at the head of the Combe, or, as it was then called, the Valley, the field containing the springs from which the School then drew, and still draws its drinking-water, a piece of ground fifteen acres in extent, was presented to the Institution by George Thomas.

Although it had now a better water supply, the size of the swimming-bath remained unaltered; and within its narrow limits the whole fifty boys bathed together,—one splashing, shouting, struggling mass. In spite, however, of the limitations of space, many boys learnt to swim; and some of them became graceful divers and dexterous swimmers.

“The fever for bathing ran high,” writes one who was among the good swimmers of his time. “I could scarcely get through the intervening days; and the interval from Friday to Monday with no bath was dreadful. I used to look with longing at pictures of little naked African boys in their native rivers. There was a map of India, I recollect, with a broad blue line representing the Ganges, which afforded me some refreshment on hot Sunday afternoons. With what longing eyes I gazed at it!”

In 1854 there was an improvement in the sewage system of the house, the drains “being carried to the field”: that is to say, to the south-western corner of Five Acres. The old drains, however, were left untouched, and were a source of great trouble in after years.



In the same year it was proposed that the bedrooms should be divided by means of wooden partitions, with the idea of ensuring greater privacy. A few such partitions, which the authorities always referred to as "cubicles," but which the boys called "'titions," were put up in 1855; and the Committee were so satisfied with the experiment that they resolved to have similar divisions placed in every bedroom on the boys' side. Two years later, partitions were provided for the girls.

The dietary of this period, although it still left much to be desired, was much better than it had been under previous administrations; and in other ways a greater degree of comfort was introduced; giving, to quote the verdict of one who was at Sidcot during the earlier half of Henry Dymond's rule, a much more home-like feeling than had hitherto prevailed. So far, the teachers and scholars had had all their meals apart; but under the Dymonds the whole of the Staff, including the Head-master and his wife, dined with the children. One week Henry Dymond sat at the head of the boys' long table; the next week he dined with the girls. Their other meals the teachers took in what was then called the Committee-room, on the left or western side of the School entrance-hall.

Although the food provided for the children did, undoubtedly, improve during this period, it was far from what it might have been. The milk supplied for breakfast was not of good quality. There was too much salt beef for dinner; and the "Resurrection Pie" of Saturday, in whose miscellaneous depths it was currently believed that a candle-end, part of a kid-glove, and several tin tacks had, at various times, been discovered, was regarded with general horror. Boiled rice-pudding three times a week, made in a vast basin and as solid as putty, gave many a Sidcot scholar of that day a permanent distaste for what many people consider one of the best of foods. Nor was it good house-keeping which sent to table rhubarb so old and tough that the puddings that

contained it were stigmatised as "Hemp." The pudding most disliked, however, was "Tallow"; that is to say, plain suet pudding, in which large lumps of suet were very plain indeed; a pudding, moreover, which was so durable that once, when the contents of a dish had been inadvertently dropped in the stone passage, all three rolls were picked up unbroken, and brought to table, where the presence of sand gave fresh ground for comment among those not behind the scenes. At the half-past five o'clock meal, known as supper, the drink was milk, by no means of the best. Nor was the quality of either the butter or the cheese such as might have been expected in a grass country like the Heart of Mendip. Treacle, too, was occasionally supplied. There are those who sigh for the delicious black treacle of their boyhood; they were certainly not scholars at Sidcot fifty years ago.

Under the strict and methodical rule of "Mother Duck," a rule prevailed that if any boy spilt milk or water on the table-cloth, he had to pay for it; a halfpenny for a small slop, a penny for a large one. Many years afterwards this rule, after long abeyance, was revived. And there is a story that a boy who, having upset a minute quantity of milk, and having been called upon to pay a penny for what he protested was merely a ha'p'orth, took up the milk-jug and quietly poured its contents over the table-cloth, remarking that he would at least have full value for his money.

The costume of the girls at this time, although still severely plain, was no longer distinctively Quaker-like in style. And no boy now wore the claret-coloured collarless coat, or the corduroy trousers or breeches of an earlier day. One rather remarkable article of dress, however, characterized this particular period, during which alone it was worn. This was a tunic made of black russell cord or alpaca, and called a Gown, which every boy wore over his ordinary coat, with the idea, no doubt, of preserving it. With the gown

was worn, by way of belt, a narrow leather strap, light in colour when first served out, but always carefully blackened by applications of milk. For a time prior to the year 1861, boys of the first class bore the letters H. C., worked in red on one sleeve of their gowns. These letters, intended by the authorities to stand for Head Class, and meant to serve as a mark of honourable distinction, were not so regarded by the common herd, who irreverently read them as "Half-cracked," or "Head-Constable." This gown of other days, detested though it was, had its points. It had only one pocket, roomy enough for little more than a handkerchief. But by tightening the strap, the whole garment, above the waist, became a spacious receptacle, most convenient for the storage of apples, for example, or for fir-cones in the well-remembered fights round the base of Banwell Tower. This ungainly and unpopular black uniform, whether devised by Edith Dymond, as was commonly supposed, or not, was given up when she left in 1865.

Before their class-room was built, the first class were distinguished by having a sitting-room to themselves. In February 1858, the bedroom called "Number 9" was "formally and ceremoniously opened as the Head Class Study," and the significant motto *Disce aut discede* was inscribed upon its door. "After an inaugural tea in the front parlour," to quote from the Literary Society Budget of the time, the Head Class students were conducted upstairs by the Mistress of the Ceremonies; and the room, consecrated to the quiet employment of the student, first resounded with the noisy cheers of the tea-imbibing youths."

The use, by the masters and others, of the boys' numbers instead of their names, once almost universal, died out before the close of this period. But so deeply-rooted had the practice been, even among the boys, that the writer can remember three of his school-fellows—"Ten," "Leven," and "Twenty"—who were never known to their companions by any other title. Nicknames were very common at this

time ; and almost every boy was called by a name different from that bestowed upon him by his parents. In some cases a boy had a nickname for no better reason than because his brother had had it before him ; but some of these epithets were singularly appropriate. Anybody would have picked out " Bullock," for instance, or " Nervous " or " Dolly." But, on the other hand, why " Balaam," or " Nink," or " Towzer " ?

With the boys' numbers were associated what were known as the " Drubbing Days," which immediately preceded the vacations. Up to twelve o'clock at noon, on the fifty-eighth day before the holidays began, the boy whose number was 58 might be " drubbed " fifty-eight times, on the back, by all or any of the boys, with the palm but not with the knuckles of the clenched hand. Next day it was the turn of number 57, next day to that of number 56, and so on, down to number 1. For a strong boy or a popular boy his Drubbing-Day was no great ordeal. But there were cases in which, unfortunately, it was made an occasion for very real bullying.

Intercourse with the girls' side was strictly forbidden. Any boy caught speaking to a girl whom he had happened to meet in the long passage, for example, was punished with the utmost rigour of the law. Brothers and sisters occasionally met, and were allowed to walk round and round the western end of the terrace in front of the School. But no more distant relationship was recognised. The girl-cousin of a small boy who came to School in 1854 was severely punished for sending him " a little note of welcome." Yet means were found, even under such conditions, of exchanging messages and presents. The same boy whom his cousin had welcomed, with such unfortunate consequences to herself, was afterwards the happy recipient of a piece of cold pudding done up in brown paper, as a token of affectionate regard from a fair admirer on the other side of the house !



In 1857 the Committee resolved to try the effect of "a short winter vacation"—of a fortnight's length—leaving it to the parents to decide whether they would have their children home or not. About three-fourths of the children did go home, and they all returned punctually. The authorities were satisfied with the result of their experiment, and the winter holiday became a permanent institution, although it was not compulsory for many years after this period. The only luggage allowed to a boy who in those days went home at Christmas time was an ugly alpaca bag, like a black pillow-case, with his number worked on it in great red letters.

The health of the scholars, for the first eight years of this period, was good. There were, indeed, two deaths during that time, making four in all since the School was founded. In March 1857 William H. Hammer, a boy of particularly bright and lively temperament, died of water on the brain, after having been only three months at Sidcot. It is significant of his character, and of the esteem in which he had been held, that his funeral, at St Austell, was attended by "thirty of his former school-fellows." Early in 1860 Edwin Bigland died from a long-standing complaint, which could in no way have been affected by school-life. At the beginning of 1862, shortly after the winter vacation, there was a considerable epidemic of measles, thirty-three cases in all. But at the February Committee, held in Bristol because of the illness at the School, it was reported that all had recovered, or were recovering, "except one delicate child." The autumn of the same year was marked by an outbreak of diphtheria, the most serious epidemic of any kind that has ever visited the Institution. The first to be attacked was Willoughby Ponifex Stevens, of Banbury, a boy who had only lately come to school, and who, after a very short illness, died on the 1st of October. "After Reading in the girls' schoolroom," writes an old scholar who was present, "we listened with solemn feelings to the news that



Willoughby Stevens had died of 'ulcerated sore throat'—diphtheria, as we learnt later. The same evening Josiah Evans took us to cricket, having first explained to us that it was not right to look upon death as a calamitous thing. Our late schoolfellow's last words, he added, were 'Oh! Mamma, the Heavenly Light!' It was a lovely evening. We enjoyed our cricket, and thought of death as a beautiful rather than an awful thing." The authorities did not seem to realise the deadly character of the disease. No investigation was made, and no special precautions were taken. A few weeks later there was another victim, Alfred Sessions, of Gloucester, a boy greatly beloved by his school-fellows, on account of his gentleness and his winning ways, qualities recognised by his comrades in his nickname of "Kitten"; and to their great grief he died, on the 28th of October, after having been ill a very short time.

A number of other boys, and some of the servants, were soon affected, but the complaint did not spread to the girls' side. The rooms numbered 9, 12, 13, and 14 were turned into sick-wards; and in November the School, with the exception of the patients, and of six girls and six boys, was dispersed. The twelve children who did not go home were sent to Weston-super-Mare, in charge of some of the teachers. It was resolved that this compulsory breaking up should take the place of the winter holiday, and that the scholars, with the exception of the invalids, should re-assemble in December. Only twenty-five boys came back on the appointed day, the 12th of December, and these were allowed a walk "nearly every day until Christmas."

"Nor was there much regular school. Of an evening we used to sit round the fire in the schoolroom and tell tales. Edward Compton, I remember, told the story of Scrooge; my first hearing of it. And Benjamin Gouch regaled us, night after night, with *Oliver Twist*, all out of his own head. When I afterwards read the book for myself, it was as if I was reading it a second time. Or we would get

those who could, to sing. Freddy Fox—who was to be the next victim of the diphtheria, though no one seemed less likely to die soon—was our best performer. He used to stand on a little stool with his back to the fire, and sing of the ‘Old Nigger whose name was Uncle Ned,’ and whose watch ‘was always three days slow.’”

It was not long before there was more trouble. Whooping-cough appeared, and then diphtheria. Edward Philp Bastin, one of the junior masters, although his case was very severe, happily recovered. But Frederic Newsome Fox, of Gloucester, after a brief but very malignant attack, died on the 6th of January. The medical officer at this time was Dr Chadwick, of Wrington, a remarkable man, who has only recently died, at an advanced age, but hale and vigorous until within a short time of his decease. The Committee also called in Dr Coe, the well-known Bristol physician, who, as there was then no railway to Sidcot, rode on horseback all the way.

There was a careful sanitary inspection of the premises after this outbreak; and serious defects in the drainage were found and rectified.

How the diphtheria was introduced in 1862 was never discovered. It was the belief of the time that that and other diseases were directly due to bad air emitted from foul drains. But it is now known that, although health is often seriously affected by sewer-gas, the disease is conveyed into the system, not in that way, but by personal contact, or through milk or water containing the bacteria. “Nevertheless,” writes Dr Newman, the great authority on Bacteriology, and himself an old Sidcot scholar, “there can be no doubt that emanations from defective drains have a materially predisposing effect, not, it is true, upon the bacilli, but upon the tissues. Sore throats thus acquired are *par excellence* the site for the development of Diphtheria.” In the two cases that occurred in 1863 it is more than probable that the disease was communicated to the sufferers

by one of the patients of the previous autumn, who, although completely recovered, still carried the bacilli in his throat.

In 1865 occurred another outbreak of illness, still confined to the boys' side, and described in the records as "Scarlatina, and sore throat of a mild type." The sore throat, however, was nothing less than diphtheria, of which there were twelve cases. It was the custom of the time to say very little about illness, and to give as scanty information about it as possible, in order not to raise unnecessary alarm. On one occasion, when one of the masters was so ill as to be almost at death's door, one of the higher household authorities said of him that he did not "shake off his little ailments so easily as some people!"

Henry Dymond had been a chemist before he became Superintendent; but after coming to Sidcot he was converted to Homœopathy, which he practised in the School, "with much success," according to a teacher of the time. But it is quite possible that the Committee had this method of treatment in view when, after the outbreak of diphtheria in 1862, they placed on record their wish that, in cases of illness, the doctor should always be called in.

The "Domestic Assistants" who watched over the children's health, and saw to their clothing and to their comfort generally, now came to be called Matrons. Of two who entered the School in 1854, one stayed six weeks, and her successor only a few months. But Adelaide Leslie, who was appointed in 1857, and Sarah Ann Osmond,—who after commencing in 1858 as a pupil teacher stayed on as matron for some years,—are both remembered with gratitude for their unremitting kindness to those who were committed to their care.

The Boys' Literary Society, which was perhaps at its very best in the closing years of this period, played a most important part in the school life of the time, and was the means of fostering among the boys a love of Natural History

which led to the formation of many collections of plants, insects, birds'-eggs, shells, and fossils, for which the neighbourhood offers great advantages; while the Essays which were read at the meetings held on the first Monday in every month, at seven o'clock in the evening, were distinguished for the care bestowed not only upon their composition, but upon their penmanship and their delivery. Occasional speeches varied the proceedings; and the peroration to one of these, by Howard F. Knight, on the Comparison between Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, was received with such thunders of applause that a boy who was in bed in the room above thought there was an earthquake, and hid his head under the clothes. A feature of the earlier Meetings was the "Budget," a summary of Home and foreign news, which, from 1855 to 1858, was almost entirely the work of the first class teacher, Henry Lees, who employed it as a sort of pulpit from which to urge upon his hearers the importance of striving after a high ideal in everything they did.

Connected with the Society was a Library, consisting partly of books bought by the Association, and partly of those lent by the members. When the Society was reorganised in 1860 the books were handed over to the School Library. Three years later, however, a library of standard works of reference was begun, with the presentation to the Society, by Theodore Compton, of Morris's "British Birds," the illustrations in which had been very greatly improved by the donor's skilful hand; and other volumes were added before the end of the period.

It was also in 1860 that Josiah Evans introduced the scheme of Curatorships, under which members who had been appointed to represent the various departments read reports on what had been seen or done in Astronomy, Botany, Entomology, Geology and Ornithology. A Curatorship of Conchology was added soon afterwards. The "Father" of Sidcot Conchologists, it may be observed, was John



Sharp, who for a time taught the third class during Henry Dymond's administration, and who sometimes, on Saturday afternoons, took out parties of boys on Natural History expeditions. One such party, searching, at John Sharp's suggestion, among the limestone screes at the base of Callow Cliffs, in 1864, discovered that the spot was a habitat for the rare little land-shell then called *Bulimus Lackhamensis*, but now known as *Bulimus montanus*. The first specimen found in the district had, however, been taken at Churchill Batch, a few months before, by a boy named Joseph S. Tylor.

In 1862 a Report of the Society's Proceedings was published for the first time; and three years later, aided by liberal subscriptions from without, the Society spent £40 on a cabinet, in which to preserve Collections illustrative of the Natural History of the neighbourhood.

When the Boys' Literary Society was first founded, its business included Drawing and Carpentering; but on the reconstruction of the Association in 1860, all kinds of Handicraft became the province of the Society of Arts, which owed its origin, indirectly at any rate, to the Rebellion of the previous year. An attempt had been made, on the corresponding day of 1860, to celebrate the anniversary of the Barring-out; and a procession of boys, headed by a leader drumming on an empty can, started to march round the playground. The demonstration was stopped. But Josiah Evans, who was now at the head of the boys' side, recognising that what was wanted was more occupation for leisure time, and a greater variety of interests, then and there established the Society of Arts, a body which, by its encouragement of various Arts and Crafts, played for many years a most important part in the School. Under its auspices very good work was done in Painting, Drawing, Map-making, Turnery and the construction of Models of Sailing-ships; work which, in some departments, has not since been equalled. No Sidcot scholar has ever produced



more masterly Water-colour Paintings than those of Edward T. Compton, whose schoolboy work gave unmistakable promise of the magnificent Alpine landscapes that have since adorned the walls of the Royal Academy, or bolder Pencil-work than Robert L. Impey's Drawings of Animals, or more skilful Maps than those of S. Herbert Strong, or more graceful Ships than the beautiful Models made by Edwin Bigland and by George E. and Edwin Thompson.

No instruction was given in Joinery and Cabinet-work; and the workshop, which, up to the year 1861, adjoined the kitchen, was used only in leisure time. But an hour and a half was devoted, every Saturday morning, to Drawing and Painting; and the young artists of the period have reason to remember with gratitude the help that they received from Theodore Compton, who, having come to live at Winscombe in 1859, was in the habit, for many years, of visiting the School, an honorary and highly honoured instructor. Many an old Sidcot scholar, not in this country only but in far-away corners of the world, still cherishes the Water-colour Drawings that he executed under Theodore Compton's eye, and that, it may be, were brightened by a few skilful touches from that master-hand.

If the work of Sidcot artists has not often been seen in the Royal Academy, the lives of many of them have been the better and brighter for the lessons of the Art-school of forty years ago. "When Josiah Evans read out my name from a list in his hand, and added the well-remembered words 'Third Prize, three-pence,'" writes one who was a scholar of the time, "I felt that I had gained a reward of surpassing encouragement. The result was to rouse in me such a desire for artistic attainment that, after leaving school, I continued to hear my name read out annually at the School of Art among the prize-winners; and if I had been allowed to follow the bent of my own inclination, my bread-and-butter of to-day would have depended on the discernment of my eye and the accuracy of my hand. Although this

life work was denied me, I can truly say that many of the most delightful hours of my life may be dated from my Drawing-lessons at Sidcot, and from Theodore Compton's quiet words of criticism and encouragement."

Theodore Compton was a constant attender, also, of the Meetings of the Boys' Literary Society, where his genial presence, whether as a kindly critic of the productions of others, or as the writer of racy Essays in prose or in rhyme, was always cordially welcomed. Many prominent figures of that day have passed into the Land of Shadows. But he, although he has far exceeded the utmost limit of the Psalmist, is still with us, and is still keenly interested in the welfare of the School:—

" Honour, and reverence, and the good repute  
That follows faithful service as its fruit,  
Be unto him whom living we salute."

Nor should it be forgotten, in connection with the artistic work of this and of later periods, that William Arnee Frank, father of four scholars of the early sixties, not only lent some fine water-colour drawings of his own, as copies, but presented to the School a beautiful painting of Skiddaw, which has often been copied, and a valuable set of plaster casts, some of which have survived the vicissitudes of more than forty years. Three fine busts, of Ajax defying the Lightning, of Juno, and of the Apollo Belvidere have, alas! succumbed to the attacks of some vandal iconoclast.

Sidcot Games, in the time of Henry Dymond, differed somewhat in character from the games that are played to-day; though it is at least doubtful if the more scientific modern player gets more enjoyment out of his cricket or football than did his predecessor of half a century ago. The year 1861 marks a distinct epoch in the history of Cricket, whose previous state may be imagined from the fact that when, in June of that year, the School eleven were about to play their

first match, the first match in the Annals of the School, it was necessary to explain to the boys, by means of a diagram on the black-board, the positions they were to occupy in the field. This historic match was with a school from Weston-super-Mare, one of the best private schools in the country, conducted by Till Adam Smith. For some years the Sidcot eleven played in no other similar contest; and this one, known as "The Match," since it was the only one, was, with rare intermission, repeated yearly—sometimes twice a year—down to recent times, although the Weston school changed hands, owing to the death of its founder, forty years ago. The match of 1861 was lost; but it was long remembered that one of the Sidcot eleven bowled with what the visiting team regarded as such unnecessary swiftness that he broke one of the bails. Sidcot fared no better in 1862 or 1863; but, in 1864, victory at last crowned the Sidcot team. "That day," writes one who took a prominent part in it, "I regard as one of the great events standing out, not only in my school-life, but in my whole life; perhaps especially as I was captain of the eleven."

The following are the scores:—

#### WOODSIDE.

G. Palmer, b Williams .....	4	b Williams.....	1
F. Barrett, c Edwards, b Williams.....	1	c Edwards, b Impey.....	0
W. Goodbody, c Saunders, b Williams.....	0	b Impey .....	15
C. Dixon, c Impey, b Williams.....	11	b Impey .....	1
F. Crouch, b Williams.....	2	c Saunders, b Impey.....	0
J. Barrett, c Williams, b Impey .....	0	b Impey .....	2
S. Newsome, c Bastin, b Williams.....	11	run out .....	16
F. Mounsey, not out.....	5	lbw Williams .....	0
R. Ecroyd, run out.....	1	b Impey .....	0
H. Harwood, b Impey .....	0	not out.....	0
W. Pooley, b Williams.....	0	b Impey .....	0
Extras.....	9	Extras .....	7
Total.....	44	Total.....	42

## SIDCOT SCHOOL.

E. A. Williams, b Newsome.....	2	b Goodbody .. .. .	13
J. Sharp, b Barrett .....	6	c Goodbody, b Newsome...	5
E. P. Bastin, c and b Newsome .....	10	b Goodbody.....	4
R. L. Impey, b Newsome .....	18	lbw .....	1
H. Puplett, run out.....	2	b Newsome.....	8
O. Edwards, b Newsome.....	0	c Goodbody, b Newsome...	1
J. R. Corbett, b Newsome.....	5	c Crouch, b Newsome.....	1
A. Sessions, c Newsome, b Crouch....	7	c Goodbody, b Newsome...	10
H. Saunders, st Barrett, b Goodbody...	0	b Crouch .....	6
A. Withy, not out .....	0	b Newsome.....	0
W. Liddetter, c Mounsey, b Crouch...	0	not out.....	1
Extras .....	8	Extras. ....	8
Total.....	58	Total.....	58

Cricket was played chiefly on the playground, which was then covered with gravel, not very evenly laid. Occasionally during the season the game was played in a field, either Pattenham or Five Acres, neither of which for many years past has served such a purpose. The former is much too narrow and the latter far too hilly for good cricket. "The Match" was usually played in Kidborough, which was prepared for the occasion by a few days' watering and rolling. The apparatus of those days was primitive and limited. The authors of the "Budget" once observed:—"We have had no regular game since the bat was broken!"

Round-arm bowling was introduced at this time. Every Sidcot cricketer of the early sixties will remember the dread inspired by the terrific deliveries of Bernard Edwards. All other bowling was under-arm, some of it very straight and very swift. Josiah Evans, who otherwise was not a good cricketer, was a star of the first magnitude as an under-arm bowler, sending down "daisy-cutters" of marvellous straightness, and, moreover, of such appalling swiftness, that it was no uncommon thing for the long-stop to be knocked clean over in trying to stop one of them, and even to be obliged to leave the field, in tears.

Except as regards the bowling, and that the fielders of

those days were always called "scouts," the cricket of forty and fifty years since was much what it is to-day. But the football, which was decidedly the more popular game, was very different from the game that goes by that name at the present time. There was no question of two elevens or two fifteens; all the boys took part in every game. Sides were often picked, but standing sides were very popular, such as "Odd and Even,"—referring to the regulation number of each individual player; "Wall and Window,"—according to the side of the long table at which each boy sat at meals; and "Class-room and School-room,"—the first class against the rest. The last was, of course, unequal as regards numbers, but the size and weight of the seniors generally made up for any other deficiency. The only man who had a definite place was the goal-keeper. All the rest of the players, five and twenty or more on a side, rushed anyhow over the field. In some respects the Sidcot Football Rules resembled those of Association. But while it was unlawful to pick up the ball, handling it was not against the regulations; and a clean catch earned the right to a free kick. The now familiar expression, "Off Side," had of course, not yet been heard of. A "Foul" was a thing unknown, although catching hold of an opponent or tripping him up or charging him from the rear were strictly prohibited. Drop-kicking was looked upon then as a high art. There were boys who could, and sometimes did kick a goal, which was allowed as a matter of course, from one end of the playground to the other—a distance of 55 yards. Football was almost exclusively a playground game. Once in the season, perhaps, we played on the grass, but not in one of the playing fields. On these rare occasions we went to the top of Callow or Dolbury, taking with us as goal-posts four stout jumping poles, which two of the boys had brought back to school, but which had been confiscated as dangerous by the authorities, and were, in consequence, regarded by the younger fry with feelings not unmingled with awe.



More popular even than Football was Shinty, or, as it is now called, Hockey, in which, as in football, all the boys took part. Perhaps the best of the various running games was Blackthorn, "perennially popular," to use the words of an old scholar, himself a most formidable player; "and deservedly so, except in the matron's department, where the torn gowns had to be mended." Two other good running-games were Cock-warning and Prison-bar. "We youngsters," writes another old scholar, "nearly got our arms wrenched off playing Cock-warning, in the half-darkness after tea, when a string of boys, holding hands, tried to circle round those not already caught, and withstand their violent rushes to break through the cordon. One memorable evening a great rush was made by a few of the bigger fellows, who, failing to break the line, carried us all over; and the boy whose hand I held, was discovered, when we lifted him from the ground, to have broken his collar-bone." Rounders was another popular game. It would sometimes hold its ground, to the exclusion of all other sports, for weeks together. For wet weather, there were games in the shed—Hopping Sodgers, French Prison Bar, French and English (a tug-of-war with the Long Rope), and the amazing performance called High Cockalorum. There was occasionally a great rage for Tops or for Marbles; still more rarely for the making of Kites. One gigantic Kite, built by subscription, stood 10 feet high. It was let up from the playground, and on one occasion it soared above the top of Sandford Hill. Another time, when sent up in half a gale of wind, it was found necessary to weight its prodigious but wholly inadequate tail with veritable logs of wood from the workshop. Fire-balloons were, as was only proper, strictly forbidden. But there were few breaches of the law more popular with a little knot of daring spirits than the construction of one of these dangerous machines. Fortunately, perhaps, for the makers, who might have had heavy damages to pay for fired ricks or roofs, the balloons seldom escaped the lynx eye of

"the tall man who used spectacles and wore a wideawake hat," with the result that the engines were confiscated, and the engineers condemned to the public ignominy of "two hours' confinement,"—the favourite punishment of that stern custodian of School law and order.

A somewhat barbarous and senseless "game" called Mad-ball was very popular during the two days of the General Meeting, although, like the making of fire-balloons, it was sternly discountenanced by the powers. During those two days it was the custom for the boys to pelt all visitors, regardless of age or sex, with small but by no means soft balls, which, on one occasion, were provided by visitors themselves, who had been scholars not so very long before, and who, so it was understood at the time, had sat up at night, for weeks before the General Meeting, making the missiles with their own hands.

The weekly walks were more extended then, not only as regards the time devoted to them—the whole of every Tuesday morning or afternoon—but the ground it was possible to cover. There was no wall round Dolbury then. Black Down was as free as its own sweet air. No one ever drove us off Sidcot Hill. No game-keeper ever turned us out of the adder-haunted thickets of Kingwood. Banwell Park was as free to us as the Queen's Highway, as, with two ancient hill-fortresses upon it, it well might be. There was no wall across Banwell Tower Hill in those days, shutting off Sidcot scholars from what had been a public recreation ground. Associated with that hill-top, in the memory of every school-boy of Henry Dymond's time, and, indeed, of many subsequent years, are the fir-cone fights that used to take place round the foot of the tower that is so conspicuous a landmark throughout the valley. It was the custom for the School-room boys, the second, third and fourth classes—each combatant having first filled the pouch of his gown with all the hard green fir-cones he could lay his hands on—to garrison the top of the mound; the mound that, in earlier

days, had served as a grand-stand from which to watch the horse-races that were held each year upon the long ridge of the hill. Then the Class-room army, similarly provided with ammunition, but much fewer in numbers, advanced to the attack, the object being to take the mound by storm. Those fir-cone fights were no child's play. Nor was the lot of an unpopular master a very enviable one when, in the face of a hail of hard green cones, he charged at the head of his men, or stood up, without cover of any kind, a target for every hostile marksman with a grudge or a grievance.

Walks to Black Down and to Burrington were very popular. Still more so, perhaps, was the longer and rarer expedition to Cheddar. With the naturalists Maxmills was the happiest of hunting-grounds, and was famous, as now, for its birds and flowers and insects. The same birds and the same flowers are found in those broad, marshy fields to-day; but there is a butterfly, the Greasy Fritillary, which was abundant there fifty years ago, and which is now almost unknown. Of the shorter expeditions, we never tired of Daffodil Valley, which, in the spring-time, was, in those days, one of the loveliest spots in the district, with its rocky hollows and its jungle of bushes all aglow with an unregarded wealth of daffodil blooms. It was always a great place for snakes, too. It was there, during a walk, in this period, that one of the masters found five grass-snakes, basking in a sunny hollow. It was also at this time that one of the boys, having dug up some daffodil-bulbs in the Valley, took them to Churchill Batch; and instead of carrying them home to his garden, as he had intended, planted them there, among the bushes, where they have so thriven and multiplied that the plants cover now a quarter of an acre of ground.

One of the most beneficent of many changes introduced by Josiah Evans was the institution of walks for the boys of the first class, who were allowed, if their conduct was satisfactory, to roam the neighbourhood from dinner-time until half-past two, which was then the hour for afternoon

school, and, on Saturdays, until half-past five. There were some boys, alas! who were never on the Walk-List, and who never shared in this highly-valued privilege. The deprivation may, in some cases, have been deserved. But there was still a tendency, on the part of the authorities, to regard a burst of high spirits as a thing to be suppressed; a thing that, to use a formula very familiar at the time, "must not occur again"; and a boy who once got into "Jossy's Black-book" seldom or never emerged from it.

Allusion has been made to the pernicious practice of striking the boys, frequently on the ears, which prevailed before the Rebellion. This species of corporal punishment, although not quite unknown during the later portion of the period, was very rare, and was strongly discountenanced by the Committee. It was a thing entirely foreign to the gentle and dignified temperament of the Head of the house. One common punishment, however, still verged on methods of barbarism. This was what was called Standing to the Line, which meant standing with one's hands behind one's back, but otherwise in the attitude of Attention, with the toes in line with the edge of one of the boards in the old school-room floor, sometimes for five or ten minutes, sometimes for an hour or more. Under Josiah Evans, "two hours' confinement," which was spent sitting or standing, according to the nature of the offence and the reputation of the offender, was not at all uncommon. Occasionally, running round the playground was substituted for the irksome inaction of standing to the line, especially for minor breaches of the regulations. The most usual penalty of all, however, consisted in the writing out, on a slate, of a list of words, from fifty to a thousand, according to the crime or to the temper of the officer.

"I can say with confidence," writes a scholar of this period, "that the moral tone was high in my day. There was always a fine standard of truthfulness in the School. Cheating at examinations was regarded with horror. That says a good deal, I think. In how many schools out of the



Society was or is that the case? In regard to lesser points I think we might have had more instruction in courtesy, forbearance, unselfishness, kindness and consideration, though the 'fine art' of living certainly did make some advance in our time."

Sidcot Meeting is now a large one. Many Friends have, of recent years, come to live in the neighbourhood. But in the early sixties there was also a very strong muster, especially on Sundays, some of the members driving long distances to Meeting. Thus there were families of Friends at Langford, Banwell, Winthill, Axbridge and Cheddar, besides a considerable number resident in the village, or within the bounds of the parish. The most prominent Friend at Sidcot was still Mary Tanner, "The Mother of the Meeting," as she has been affectionately styled. Arthur and Margaret Tanner were then living at Oakridge, and they frequently invited members of the School Staff to their house, sometimes especially to meet distinguished visitors, such as John Bright or William Lloyd Garrison. Nor was any other party so popular as that given every summer at Oakridge; when the host played at Hide-and-seek as heartily as any school-boy, and when the hostess entertained her guests with a gracious hospitality that will live in the memories of those who shared it while memory remains.

The Sidcot Meeting-house of fifty years ago differed in many points from the building in use to-day. Before the improvements effected by Josiah Evans after he became Head-master, it possessed no vestibule, no cloak-rooms, no eaves, no outside clock; and it closely resembled, in appearance, the Union Chapel by the railway-bridge on Lynch, except that it had no porch. Barn-like as it was, however, and comfortless, there are many old scholars who have cause to remember it with gratitude and even with affection. "To me," writes an old boy who knew it in Henry Dymond's time, "To me the Meeting-House at Sidcot, bare of ornament,



severely plain, and inartistic in architecture as it was, was an entrance-hall to a realm of beauty which I believe to be eternal."

Late in the year 1858 the building caught fire. "We were sitting in the school-room," writes an old scholar who was present, "one Wednesday morning, all ready to go into Meeting. But time passed. The old clock in the class-room struck eleven, and still there was no order to march. At length one of the teachers announced that the Meeting-house was on fire, adding the exciting news that we must help to put it out. I was one of a line of boys from the swimming-bath, through the shed-door, to the Meeting-house, and we passed buckets of water from hand to hand, and up to the masters and the bigger boys, who, mounted on ladders, tore the slates off the roof, and threw water among the blazing rafters, which by this time were sending up a prodigious column of smoke. The fire was put out at last, but a great deal of damage had been done, and the building was not used for some weeks. We had Meeting in the girls' school-room for a long time, which, together with the fact that we all got soaked from head to foot, in passing the buckets of water, is what I remember most about the whole affair.

Five years later, volunteers were called for again, not, however, to serve as firemen, but to pull down a tree which might otherwise have fallen on the roof of the School. Up to the year 1863 there stood on the edge of the terrace, towards the eastern end, at a point still marked by a pronounced curve in the box-edging, a tall elm-tree. During a violent storm this tree, which was afterwards found to have been growing in the mouth of an old mine-shaft, was loosened by the wind; and although it did not actually fall, it was clear that another strong gust would bring it down; and, moreover, it had a most threatening list towards the School building. Its trunk was at once partly sawn through. A rope was fastened to it, at the height of some 15 feet from the ground, and the boys' first class, pulling it away

from the house, brought it crashing down among the trees of the shrubbery.

The genial and kindly rule of Henry and Edith Dymond, the improved comfort, and the higher standard of Education had their natural effect upon the prosperity of the School. At the General Meeting of 1856 it was reported that there were not only no vacancies, but that there were two scholars above the recognised number on each side of the house. So signal an event was celebrated by a Walk, and by "a Treat of Tea and Cake" provided by two Bristol Friends, followed by Games and Recitations in the girls' school-room. Next year there were ninety-one scholars, and ten names on the list for admission, a state of things before unknown, and justly regarded by the Committee as "evidence of confidence in the management." It was in that year, also, that the scholars were alarmed and excited by the visits of burglars, who, however, did no more than steal a few towels from the boys' shed, and break into the laboratory, where they could hardly have found much to carry off. They got more from the Long Garden, from which they looted large quantities of onions.

There was a lull in the prosperity of the Institution a year or two later, but it was only temporary, and it was not long before the ranks were again filled. At the General Meeting of 1861 it was reported that during the previous year there had been several children in excess of the number originally contemplated. In 1862 there were fifty-eight boys, a number not reached again for many years.

In spite, however, of the excellent state of the Register, the condition of the School Finances was even more unsatisfactory than ever. The Annual Subscriptions continued to fall, while the Average Cost as regularly rose. There were only three years during Henry Dymond's rule in which the balance was not on the wrong side; and in each of those years the result was owing to special gifts, in one year amounting to more than £1000. Even when there were

ninety-four children the expenditure was £300 more than the income. In 1855 the Glastonbury Estate was sold for £900, and the proceeds applied to the repayment of loans. In 1856, 1857, 1858 and 1863, however, the Committee found it necessary to raise further loans; and the Report presented to the General Meeting of 1865 showed a total debt of £3720.

The question of raising the Rates of Admission was several times discussed in Committee. The period had begun with graduated payments; £12, £16 and £21 from the Associated Meetings, and £15, £18 and £21 from those beyond that limit. In 1857, when eleven children paid £21, eleven paid £15, and forty-six £12, it was agreed that £2 should be added to the fee, and that no child should be admitted at the lowest rate if the Committee thought that the parents could afford to pay more. The highest rate thus became £23 and the lowest £14. In 1861 a Circular was issued, calling the attention of parents to the state of the School funds, and to the cost and value of the Education, in relation to the amount that was paid. It was also pointed out that there was "a strong claim on the parents of children in the School who may be able to pay the full annual cost of each child." This Annual Cost, which was £25, 7s. 11d. in Henry Dymond's first year, ending at General Meeting 1855, rose, in consequence of illness, to £29, 11s. 2d. in 1862; and, in the last year of the administration, still remained as high as £28, 3s. 2d. It may be added that, although the Circular "met with some response," the adverse balance next year was £210, 3s. 4d., or slightly worse than for the year before.

In 1864 there was another revision of Rates. The lowest Rate was to remain at £14, but might be reduced to £12 in special cases; but the minimum from the Non-associated Meetings was to be raised to £18. Parents were to be told that the cost was close on £30, and that they were expected to pay as much as they could. Two by no means insignificant

charges on the revenue were removed in 1856, when, "in order to try and equalize income and expenditure," it was decided that the children's travelling expenses should no longer be paid by the Institution, and that no more clothing should be furnished free of charge.

A noteworthy and significant Minute was made by the Committee in 1860 in connection with the appointment of two new masters, Josiah Evans and William Kitching, who received salaries higher than the School had previously paid to men in their position. After stating that the expense about to be incurred was great, but adding that more children were then coming in at the highest fee, the Minute goes on:—"It is to this source that the Institution will mainly have to look to meet the increasing expenditure in maintaining an efficient staff of officers." The Committee knew only too well—as their predecessors had discovered within two years of the Foundation of the School—that the Institution, which, indeed, was never expected to pay its way, could not be maintained without constant and liberal aid from Friends; and that aid was steadily declining.

In spite of the low state of the exchequer, the School acquired, during this period, several pieces of property, some of which, however, were gifts. In 1855 about three acres of land were added to the Bridgwater Estate, at a cost of £195 per acre. In 1858 two plots of land and four cottages, in what is now the Long Garden, were purchased. One of these, a strip adjoining the Bristol Road, with three dilapidated dwellings on it, was bought from the Dean and Chapter of Wells for £110, and the ruinous habitations were pulled down. The other plot, which was farther back from the road, and on which stood a cottage which was not demolished until the building of the Head-master's house in 1905, was purchased from David Lewis for just twice that sum. In 1860, as already noted, George Thomas bought and presented to the Institution the field at the head of the Combe, in which was the source of the School water-supply.



In the following year the same generous donor gave to the School the house now known as Sidcot Lodge, but which was then a not very reputable inn, called the "King William." The staple from which the tavern-sign formerly swung may still be seen in the south-eastern corner of the building. Here the Head-master's two sisters, Miriam and Josephine Dymond, lived for some years. "Their refined and cultured minds made their home a favourite resort," to quote the words of a teacher of the time; and Josephine Dymond was engaged as Drawing-mistress for the girls. In 1855 Joseph Motley gave to the Institution ten twenty-pound shares in the Glastonbury Railway, on condition that 4 per cent. on their value should be paid to him as an annuity during his life-time. The Bridgwater Estate was not only added to, but improved during this period; first, by an Act of Parliament which included it within the Borough of Bridgwater, and declared John Street, which was School property, to be a public highway to be repaired, paved, and lighted at the expense of the town; and, secondly, by the construction, in 1857, of a new street. In 1859 some of the tenants on the Estate complained that the Railway Company interfered, contrary to agreement, with their crossing the line. The Board of Trade having been appealed to, the Directors gave way, and took down the notice-boards warning-off trespassers. But they refused a written agreement, nor did they fulfil their promise without further pressure.

In 1863 Edith Dymond's health so far failed that she resigned her post as Mistress, although she still continued to reside in the house; and Adelaide Leslie, the senior matron, was appointed "Housekeeper, until the Vacation." The vacation, however, brought no change, and the domestic management remained in the new housekeeper's hands until the Dymonds left. That was not long. In 1864 Henry Dymond himself became seriously unwell; and in the following year he also found himself compelled to resign his office. The authorities received his resignation with regret, and they



added to their Minute of acceptance of it those memorable words :—

“In thus parting with him after eleven years’ connection with the Institution, the Committee would express their sense of his zealous and conscientious discharge of the duties of his office, and of his solicitude for the moral and religious well-being of those committed to his care.”

## CHAPTER IX

JOSIAH EVANS, 1865-1873

THE eleven years of Henry Dymond's rule saw great advance in the direction of Education, of Equipment and of Domestic Comfort ; and the year of his retirement found the School in a higher state of efficiency than it had attained at any previous period. He was succeeded by Josiah Evans, the late first class teacher, who had been for some years the most prominent, indeed the dominating, figure in the Institution, and whose vigorous and original personality had made itself felt in many ways, all tending towards progress and reform. Josiah Evans's administration, although it lasted only eight years, was characterized by a series of important improvements ; and under him and his officers the standard of Education was raised throughout the whole School. And if the tone and character of the boys' first class may have seemed less striking than it had been when he himself was in command of it, this may have been partly because more able teaching, better discipline and an improved social atmosphere now prevailed in the lower classes. The change that now came over the discipline may be understood from a remark made at the time by one of the older boys, who remembered the previous regime :—" Why, when I came, the fellows were all afraid of 'Old Joss,' of course ; but nobody cared much for the other teachers. But now, these two"—naming the junior masters, boys not out of their teens.—"these two have it all their own way, and a fellow daren't be up to larks or anything."

With small exception, Josiah Evans may be said to have been fortunate in his lieutenants ; men whose hearts were in



*Josiah Evans.*



their work, and who spared no pains and grudged no time in promoting the best interests of the scholars, and who maintained good order without undue severity. Josiah Evans took little part in the teaching. But it was he who, in conference with his Staff, planned all the work; and he was closely in touch with it in all its details. And as those who served under him had good reason to know, he was a most cordial supporter, not only of his principal masters, but also of young officers who might otherwise have had difficulty in asserting their authority.

In the capable hands of Mary Hannah Evans the conditions of School life were much improved, and the standard of comfort was materially raised. Nowhere, perhaps, was this more shown than in the arrangements for the teachers, who were objects of the new mistress's especial and particular care. It was a maxim of hers that the children were likely to get on better if the interests of those who were in charge of them were carefully consulted. The teachers dined with the scholars, who then took their meals in two separate dining-rooms, looking out over the terrace. But they had breakfast, tea and supper in the Committee Room, now the Headmaster's study. These meal-times, which came as a pleasant relief, a kind of quiet back-water in the busy and at times even turbulent stream of school-life, were greatly valued by the Staff. Supper in particular, the only meal when all could be present, was always an interesting function, frequently enlivened by scientific or literary discussions. The comfort of both scholars and teachers was most carefully watched over, and every member of the household knew that, whether in health or in sickness, he was the object of Mary Hannah Evans's gentle and kindly consideration.

"It is not easy to do justice to her character, writes one who knew her well: "but if ever a woman deserved the 'well-done!' at the end of her pilgrimage, it was Mary Hannah Evans. I lived under the same roof with her at Sidcot, for four years, and my testimony is that she was one



of the bravest, truest, most unselfish and devoted of women, whether as a wife, a mother, a sister, a schoolmistress or a friend, that I ever had the privilege of knowing. I can see her now, walking round the dining-room while we were at Breakfast, carefully scanning every boy to see if any were ill or in trouble, or had anything to say to her; and all in a kind, motherly way that brought out an affectionate response from most of us. And although her hands were more than full, with the care of that great household and of her own family, I never saw her ruffled. Her calm, dignified, kindly expression always showed whence she drew the strength for her daily tasks and duties."

All the boys' teachers who served under Josiah Evans—four of whom had been boys in his class—had been to the Flounders Institute, and had therefore received some amount of preparation for their work, in the direction, not of training, but of study. One of them, Arthur Henry Eddington, B.A. (Lond.), was the first Friend Graduate on the Staff. Of the rest, almost all have since taken degrees. Henry Lawrence, whose early death cut short a most promising career, was an M.A. of London, and his brother, John Lawrence, now Professor of English Literature in the University of Tokio, was the first Friend to gain the coveted degree of D.Litt. of London. Six of Josiah Evans's masters, John Sharp, B.A., Benjamin Gooch, B.A., Robert M. Lidbetter, Arthur H. Eddington, B.A., John Lawrence, M.A., D.Litt., and the present writer, afterwards became heads of schools. Two only, however, Robert M. Lidbetter and John Lawrence, are in scholastic harness still. Of Sidcot masters of the time, four are dead, two have taken to other occupations, and three have left the field.

Four different masters taught the boys' first class during the eight years of Josiah Evans's reign. All that need be said about the first of them is that, as far as the boys were concerned, his year of office was a wasted year. Other interests diverted his attention from his work, and

it was well for the School that he made no longer stay in it.

He was followed by A., a man of very different temper, untrained, indeed, and with no great qualification, but intellectual, hard-working, and strictly conscientious. He was the last Sidcot teacher to use the plain Quaker speech, which sometimes sounded somewhat quaintly on his lips.

"Dost thou understand that?" he said once to a specially clever boy, after a hazy mathematical explanation.

"No, please," was the answer.

"Then," returned the angry Irishman, "it shows what a little fool thou art!"

Another boy, also a brilliant scholar, said to him once:

"Please, I don't understand that."

"Then go and stand in the corner," was the not very enlightening rejoinder.

Under A. the class recovered some of its lost ground, and the tone of the whole School was raised. Much more, however, was done by his successor, the late John Sharp, whose painstaking and thorough methods did much to raise the standard of Education and to preserve a good moral atmosphere in the School. He promoted the leisure pursuits of the boys, helping them especially with their collections of plants and shells; and he constantly joined in the games, in which his predecessor had taken no part. Discipline, too, was well maintained under John Sharp; but he had some efficient subordinates, and it was never very difficult for a man to keep order when he had Josiah Evans at his back.

John Sharp was succeeded by B., who had previously taught the second class, an intellectual and vigorous teacher, who was keenly interested in Science, especially in Astronomy. It was under him, also, that the real study of English Literature at Sidcot first began.

At this period all the masters played, more or less, at cricket or football, or both; and they often joined in running games on the playground. There was no compulsion in the games.

On the Saturday afternoon, boys who preferred cricket went to Pattenham or Five Acres, according to which of those two very inferior playing-fields was not "down in hay"; while the naturalists, with nets or plant-tins or hammers or collecting-boxes, betook themselves to favourite haunts at Sandford or Maxmills or Burrington, not unfrequently in company with one of the masters. The weekly walks, which were never known as pig-drives then, were keenly enjoyed, and were made occasions for much work in Natural History. All the masters, again, took an active part in the work of the Boys' Literary Society. It was one of the junior teachers, John Lawrence, who was the means of establishing the Curatorship of Archæology, for which he did much brilliant work. Indeed, it may be truly said that among the masters were to be found the most enthusiastic naturalists and the most careful essay-writers in the Society. Games were not then regarded as of paramount importance. If anything, less attention was paid to them than to Natural History. The scholars of that day may be said to have used, as well as the limited knowledge of the time would allow, their ample opportunities of getting to know both the country round and its abundant wild life.

Before the close of this period the old antagonistic feeling between boys and teachers may be said to have almost entirely died away, and to have been succeeded by a friendly relationship which could not fail to have a marked effect upon the prosperity of the School. The scholars learnt that it was possible to be governed in school-time by a teacher who expected implicit obedience; and, when official hours were over, to find in their master, martinet though he might be, a guide, companion and friend, ready to join in their games, to help them in their leisure occupations and in the various Natural History pursuits which now played so important a part in the life of the School.

"I should say," writes a scholar of the period, "that, on the whole, the Moral Tone was very high at Sidcot. Black

sheep there were, undoubtedly, but they had a bad time of it. Yes, I remember well the 'standing to the line.' I once got four hours, myself, straight off; a fearful waste of time, and a great humiliation for a first class boy to stand in the lower school hour after hour, with his hands behind his back. I shall never recover those lost hours!"

Up to the year 1868 the teachers had seldom been able to get away from their work for more than an hour or two at a time. But now an arrangement was made by which two of the Staff divided the duty of Saturday afternoon and evening, while the other two were free from dinner-time until ten o'clock, when the doors were locked. In the time thus placed at their disposal the Staff were able to make long expeditions, in which they were sometimes accompanied by the Headmaster himself. And these Saturday raids, which included walks to Brockley, Brent Knoll, Ebbor, Wells, and Glastonbury, to Bristol, Clevedon, and Portishead, to the Lias quarries of Dunball and the Stone Circles of Stanton Drew, were a source of great pleasure, interest, and recreation. The opening of the Cheddar Valley Railway, in 1869, while benefiting the School in many other ways, was also of value in the same direction.

Besides being of great importance to the district, the railway is of special interest to Sidcot, in that it was constructed by two old scholars, Francis Fox, M.Inst.C.E., and his brother John H. Fox, C.E., the former of whom was then Chief Engineer to the Bristol and Exeter Railway Company—now incorporated in the Great Western. The line was opened as far as Cheddar, on the 3rd of August 1869, a date remembered by many old scholars, since the School re-assembled on that day, and they were thus among the earliest passengers. On the opening day those who would were allowed to travel up and down the line without payment; and most amusing scenes were witnessed on the platform of our station, many of the passengers never before having seen a train at close quarters.



Woodborough Station, as it was originally called, was, unlike all the other stations on the line, built of wood, for the sake of lightness, as it was placed on a newly-made embankment, and was one of the picturesque features of the line. Its name was soon altered to Winscombe, on account of confusion with another Woodborough, in Wiltshire. It is still remembered that when the board bearing the word "Woodborough," in Old English letters, arrived, the carpenter, not being able to read it, fixed it upside down.

The Permanent Way of the Cheddar Valley Branch was originally Broad Gauge, 7 feet wide, the same as that of the Great Western, Bristol and Exeter, and South Devon Railways. But an alteration of gauge was, unfortunately for the public in general, already in the air. The Bristol and Exeter Railway had, not long before, laid an additional rail on part of their system, in order to allow of the running of 4 feet 8½ inch, or Narrow Gauge rolling stock. And Francis Fox, foreseeing the probability of an early change, adopted, for the new branch, the cross-sleeper instead of the longitudinal baulk, thus admitting of the laying of an extra rail, or of narrowing the gauge by moving one of the rails. The latter plan was adopted; and some years after the opening of the line, traffic was suspended for three days while the rail was moved.

Nearly forty years have passed since the completion of the railway, and hundreds of Sidcot scholars have, since then, made use of it. Among them all perhaps none have more reason to remember it than three boys who, one Saturday afternoon, about ten years after the opening of the line, having possessed themselves of an explosive mixture, consisting of sulphur and potassium chlorate, and having gone out to try experiments with it, found that the compound, however hard they hammered it between two stones, refused to explode. They were near Shute Shelve at the time, and not far from the railway. It occurred to one of the three that an iron rail would be more satisfactory as an anvil, and



they went down to the line. As they approached it, they became aware that a "slug," as every Cheddar Valley train was irreverently called, had just left Winscombe Station, and was puffing up the incline.

"Look here," exclaimed one of the conspirators, "let's make the train explode it!"

"Yes," said another; "and put it in the tunnel; it'll make far more row!"

The precious packet was accordingly laid on a rail just inside the tunnel; and then the three thoughtless youngsters sat down to watch the effect, making no attempt to hide. It had not occurred to them that there was any reason for hiding.

Up came the train. The whistle sounded, and the engine passed into the tunnel. And then, with as satisfactory a bang as heart of school-boy could desire, the stuff did go off. But what followed was entirely outside the calculations of the delighted three. The driver of the train, thinking he had run over a warning signal, pulled up. Anxious faces appeared at the carriage windows, and the guard jumped out of his van. A moment's examination of the torn paper sticking to the rail showed the officials that this was no regulation detonator. Somebody caught sight of the three watching figures. The guard at once gave chase, and the culprits were run to earth at the School, where their pursuer, very hot and angry, hinted at the most serious consequences.

The next thing that happened was a visit from a Bristol inspector, who called for the surrender of the daring rascals who had actually stopped a train. The officer was, however, disarmed by the prompt confession and evident penitence of the criminals, although he lectured them severely upon the enormity of their offence. A letter of apology and regret to the Directors of the Bristol and Exeter Railway Company was accepted; and the only result of the episode was that the suspense and the fear of possible consequences—his school-fellows had assured him that he would certainly be

sent to gaol—so preyed upon the mind of the chief performer, that he had to go home for three months to recruit.

The close of Josiah Evans's rule found the standard of Education greatly raised. If that of the boys' first class was not materially higher, that of the lower classes was much advanced. On the girls' side the education was revolutionised. Before this period it had been much behind that in the boys' wing. What visitors thought of it in 1870 may be gathered from a Minute of the General Meeting of that year:—

“This Meeting wishes to express its opinion that an improvement in the standard of education of the girls in this school would be acceptable to many of its members.”

The immediate result of this Minute was an arrangement by which the upper class of girls had occasional lessons from the boys' teachers. Josiah Evans, indeed, made a great effort to introduce Departmental Teaching, and to develop this interchange of teachers; but his Staff, at any rate as regards the boys' side, were conservative, and were not greatly in favour of the experiment. It was not, however, until the last year of the period that any appreciable reform was effected in the girls' education. In 1872 Jane Redfern was appointed to the first class, and in her hands the whole tone of that side of the house was changed. The character of the work was altered and greatly improved. The study of English Literature was introduced, Euclid, Algebra and the Higher Rules of Arithmetic were taught, and lessons were given in Science. There was, however, so much to be done that years were still to elapse before the education of the girls could be fairly said to equal that on the other side of the house. Nor was the work of reform confined to school-hours only. The Literary Society flourished; rational leisure occupations were introduced; the games were improved—against the wishes of some, who still clung to what they regarded as more “lady-like” amusements—the girls were taught to play cricket; and the walks were

made interesting by the encouragement given to the study of Natural History.

The work of the boys' first class at the close of this period included Latin—Virgil or Cæsar, with exercises from Smith's *Principia*, Part I.; French—Charles XII., or one of the Erckmann-Chatrian series, with exercises from Chardenal; English Literature and Grammar—including Analysis and Composition; Science, Natural and Experimental; Euclid, Books I. and II.; Algebra to Quadratic Equations; the ordinary Rules of Arithmetic; English History, Geography, Reading, Writing, Spelling, Model and Freehand Drawing, and Scripture History. In the late sixties a little Euclid and Algebra were taught in the second class, and French and Latin were commenced at the bottom of the School.

Under Josiah Evans's rule much attention was paid to Science. Scientific Lectures, many of them experimental, were, for some years, given weekly to the whole School, by the Head-master, and by members of the Staff. The former lectured on Geology, Physiology and Chemistry. He was a most able experimenter, while the diagrams he drew were masterpieces of clearness. Not a few old Sidcot scholars have to thank Josiah Evans for teaching them how to make telling diagrams, and to print in bold and legible characters. Three of the masters—a small association calling itself the "Lecture Mania Company"—gave lectures on Astronomy, Sound, Light and Heat. The last three courses were fully illustrated by experiments with apparatus that had, in great measure, been constructed by the lecturers themselves, although a good deal of useful apparatus was now bought for the purpose. The old laboratory was much used by the Staff during this period, especially for the preparation of these lectures. In 1870 Joseph Pease presented the School with a three-inch telescope, a good microscope and a number of slides—all three made by Edmund Wheeler—a fine Fortin's barometer, and a set of meteorological apparatus. The School had possessed instruments

before, but they were of a somewhat primitive description. The telescope was a four-inch reflector; the microscope was an ancient "Culpepper," quite unusable, while the rain-gauge and thermometers were old and untrustworthy. At the same time the School lantern was fitted with an oxy-hydrogen jet instead of the old oil lamp, and was much used for the illustration of lectures. The Staff also gave Readings to the whole School, and lectured on such subjects as Greek Mythology, the Fall of Troy and the Natural History of Birds.

Edmund Wheeler's visits continued throughout this period, and his brilliant lectures were more cordially welcomed than ever by scholars and teachers, who were already strongly tinctured with a love of scientific knowledge. Nor were the lecturer's visits entirely of a public and professional character. The hours he spent in the Masters' common room—or study, as it was then called—whose occupants he delighted by his flute-playing and by his racy stories, and by the interesting discussion of scientific subjects, were appreciated by the Staff quite as much as were the lectures themselves. There was one special topic on which Edmund Wheeler was particularly entertaining. He had a theory that water could be made red-hot. He himself had made it red-hot, so he declared. He used to describe how, having cut short an old gun-barrel, he had filled it full of water, and had closed it by screwing in a plug. Then how, having obtained the use of a blacksmith's forge, while the owner was at dinner, he had put his tube into the fire, and with the aid of the bellows had brought the iron vessel to a bright red heat. The water was, of course, invisible. But the inference was, so Edmund Wheeler held, that, if the tube was red-hot, its contents were red-hot, too. At this point, however, the apparatus blew up, the smithy-window was blown out, while, as for the experimenter himself, the explosion—to quote from the once popular "Contributions of Q. Q."—"jerked the philosopher out of his cell."



Another man whose lectures were much appreciated was Professor Macintosh, whose graphic discourses on Astronomy and Geology, accompanied by modelling with heaps of sand, and by clever chalk diagrams, amused and delighted the scholars of 1866. In the same year came Thomas Cooper, the famous Chartist, who lectured in the Meeting-house, on Christianity.

"I have often thought," writes a scholar of nearly forty years ago, "of the visit to Sidcot of a man who came nominally to lecture on Peace, but who so inflamed our little souls with the lust of battle, that we should have liked nothing better than to go out then and there and smash up those smug, self-satisfied Germans. Many a time, in the days that followed, did we fight out, behind the fives-tower, desperate repetitions of Sedan; only that, with us, the triumphant French majority always used to crumple up the helpless little German army. The lecturer was clearly not a successful advocate of Peace; but his lecture was, nevertheless, an entertainment of a high order. He was a little disturbed, at first, on finding that his map of the Seat of War had been hung—far out of reach—upside down. It was an accident, of course; but I heard a whisper afterwards to the effect that two of the teachers, who had correctly gauged the visitor's calibre, had done it on purpose.

"The lecturer was quite ignorant of French, and perplexed us with references to such places as 'Bazzeels,' 'Givvy' and 'Didgeon'—which last he pronounced to rhyme with pigeon. He had been over a few of the battle-fields after the War: but he quite gave us to understand that he himself had been present when, amid a hail of shells, a French colonel of infantry cried out 'monn dew, cest le garry!' When he afterwards described how he had drawn tears from the eyes of an old peasant woman by reading the French Testament to her, none of us needed to be told that they were tears of laughter.

"Two of the lecturer's 'facts' I have never forgotten.



Describing one of the great battles, he declared that the guns 'were up to their axle-trees in blood'; and of the whole War he said that it had left 'ten thousand times ten thousand widows in France,'—a trifle of a hundred millions."

Neither Music nor Singing was taught at Sidcot in Josiah Evans's day; and some years were still to pass before they found a place in the curriculum; but Benjamin Gooch's guitar, with which he accompanied the songs that delighted his colleagues in the study, was probably the first musical instrument tolerated in the School. The guitar had been in the house four years earlier, under the previous administration; but, as was observed in the previous chapter, its notes were never heard.

With the disappearance of Henry Dymond's broad-brimmed hat, and his consort's coal-scuttle bonnet, and with the abolition of the boys' "gowns" at the commencement of this period, all peculiarity of dress at Sidcot ceased; and since then there has been nothing, in the costume of the scholars or the Staff, to mark them as members of the Society of Friends. On the boys' side, however, there was a change which, although it may seem trivial, was a welcome improvement. So far, the masters had been addressed by their full names, with no prefix of "Mr," or addition of "Sir." And in answering or asking questions, the word "please" was introduced, in season and out of season, so much and so often that the grasshopper became a burden. Thus, it was—

"Please, Robert Lidbetter, please; may I fetch a ball out of the Tatfield, please?"

Or it was—

"Jack, did you brush your hair this morning?"

"No, please."

Or—

"Percy, have you forgotten the surgery-bell?"

"Yes, please."

The masters now made a dead set at this practice. They left the boys to choose their method of address, but they

refused, as they said, to be called "please" any longer. The objectionable custom was dropped. The boys began to style their masters Mr Lidbetter, or Mr Eddington; answers took the form of "Yes, Sir," and "No, Sir," and the hated "please" was heard no more.

The scholars were examined nearly every year during this period; most frequently by Thomas Hunton of Torquay, later by Messrs Baxter and Davis, British School Inspectors, and, in Josiah Evans's last year, by J Stuart Jackson, M.A., the first Examiner sent to Sidcot by the Cambridge Syndicate. The visit of the last-named was the result of a School Conference held in London in 1872, at which it was agreed that the University authorities should be invited to send examiners to all the Friends' Public Schools. The Reports of the various examiners who visited Sidcot were in general laudatory, sometimes very much so. Mr Davis's Report for 1868, however, contained some unfavourable strictures, with which the Committee, who really knew, from personal experience, a good deal about the subject, were "unable to agree." In addition to these examinations from outside, the Committee continued their own inspections; and these, instead of becoming less searching on account of the regular attendance of paid examiners, were more minute, and were frequently accompanied by a good deal of criticism. The School examinations, also, were held at the end of each half, and on the results the place of every scholar depended. There were no marks for work in the boys' first class, and in the other classes they were not taken into account in the final placing. The entire examination, which lasted five or six weeks, was taken by every boy in the School, whether the questions were in connection with his own particular class or not. And in the half-yearly placing, a good writer or a good reader from one of the lower classes sometimes got a place quite near the top of the School.

The holding of the General Meeting was one of the most momentous events in the year. For weeks before it, all boys

with special talents for artistic work were engaged, every day, and all day, in preparing "specimens,"—drawings in pencil and sepia, maps, printing, writing. These specimens were exhibited in the class-room, during the General Meeting, and were afterwards bound, in long thin volumes, which are still preserved. "My recollections of General Meeting Examinations," writes an old scholar, "are still vivid, after the lapse of more than forty years. I can still hear 'The Varnish Man' asking some dismayed youngster to define what was understood by the word Grace. I can see dear old Robert Charleton, making it as easy as possible for a boy who had come to grief over the *Pons Asinarum*, or who had made a hash of the Forty-seventh Proposition. He was always satisfied and always kind."

At the time of Josiah Evans's accession, in 1865, several improvements were urgently called for. The most pressing of these was in connection with appliances for bathing. The pipes which, ten years before, had been laid down from the springs in the Combe, had become so choked with a deposit of lime and iron that the water-supply had almost ceased. It had long been impossible to change the water after the swimming-bath had once been filled for the season. And by the end of the summer its slimy bottom, its population of newts and beetles, and the green colour of its surface were more suggestive of a horse-pond than of a place to bathe in. Poor as it was, it was the only bath. There were indeed two shower-baths in the house, on the top floor, under the great water-tanks. But they were never used by the scholars, and only very occasionally by the Staff. The only other provision for personal ablution, besides the bowls in what was known as the "wash-house"—the comfortless, stone-paved room on the ground floor—and the taps over the sink in the shed, was a number of oblong wooden tubs which were occasionally arranged in the wing of the wash-house, and in which the boys used to wash their feet. These tubs had been designed without any regard to stability, and

were so ill-balanced that they could be upset with a minimum of effort; and by the end of the ceremony the wash-house floor was reduced to an almost impassable condition, in spite of the remonstrances of the master in charge, islanded on a piece of wooden lattice-work in the midst of the deluge. For some years before this time there had been talk of providing proper appliances for warm bathing; and when, in 1866, the Committee issued an appeal for a special subscription to cover the cost of projected improvements, the building of a bath-room was one of the principal objects mentioned.

The first step was the laying of 1009 yards of new 3-inch iron pipes from the springs to the School, which was accomplished during the summer vacation. The old pipes, whose diameter was  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches, were found to be, in places, so filled up that they would not admit a knitting-needle. The new pipes were varnished, in order to check the accumulation of a similar deposit. In addition to the laying of the new main, the water-supply was further improved by taking in another spring. By the payment of a sovereign the School acquired—or thought they had acquired, for the point was afterwards disputed—the right to put down a pipe to the old well in the adjoining orchard.

The bathroom was commenced in the summer of 1867, but, although reported to be nearly finished in August of that year, was not actually in use until February 1868. It was provided with six stone-ware baths, and with a row of basins for the boys' use in the mornings. By means of doors opening into the respective wings, the baths were accessible from both sides of the house.

"Somehow," writes an old scholar of this time, whose profession—he is Consulting Engineer to the Admiralty on the subject of the storage of oil for fuel—takes him sometimes more than 70,000 miles in a year; "Somehow, the things that seemed of moment, in those happy, far-off days at Sidcot, seem rather to have lost their importance, in the lapse of forty crowded years. But I well remember how, in the



frosty weather, when we were all snug in bed, and volunteers were called for, to pour down water for slides, how cheerfully we always turned out. We were hardy plants. I remember, too, having to wash in that stone-floored room down below, when the snow was driving in under the door from the playground. I shiver still at the thought of it. Well, it never did me any harm, and it has helped to pull me through some strenuous times. Nor shall I ever forget the time when, as Curator of Meteorology, I was on my way to read the barometer in the hall, I met 'Old Jos' abruptly, as I rounded the corner. Abruptly is a good word; I nearly knocked him over. He, for his part, swept the poor barometer off its native nail. 'It was a chilly day for me when the mercury went down!'"

After the building of the bath-room, in 1869, the downstairs lavatory was disused, at least by the boys. Part of it was divided off, and converted into a place of store, especially, so it was believed, for pickles. "Pickles" may be taken in two senses. For in this gloomy chamber, unlighted, stone-paved, redolent of cheese and onions and vinegar, were confined the worst of the offenders that were sent to the Head-master by the teachers. "The prisoner had to stand in the darkest corner—all the corners were dark, for that matter—with his hands behind him, for a day or two, or more, on an exhilarating diet of bread and water. No, I never got as far as that myself. It is true that the very first day I was at school, I rubbed Old Jos the wrong way, and I was in his Black Book ever after. But I was never in the Black Hole, where poor \* \* \* \* and the unfortunate \* \* \* \* spent so many dreary days."

Another pressing need was that of a new kitchen-range. The old one was very inadequate, and was a constant source of expense from its dilapidated condition. A new range was put up in 1866, but it was not satisfactory. In the following year a different firm, the firm who provided the baths, erected a second range, which remained in use for many



years. The gas-works, which had been put up more than forty years before, had suffered much deterioration, and were greatly in need of repair and improvement, besides being really too small for their purpose. It was not found possible, however, for want of funds, to build new works, or even to provide a larger gas-holder, but many repairs were effected in 1866, and several improvements introduced.

During this period the long, single field-gate between the road and terrace broke down, and was replaced by the present not very artistic pair of gates, one of which was made out of the iron-work in the centre of the old wooden barrier, while the other was intended, by the village blacksmith, to match it.

Another beneficial change, which, however, took some years to accomplish, was the asphaltting of the boys' playground, which had previously been covered with gravel, and which then, and for many subsequent years, was the chief place for games of all kinds, and was, moreover, very different from what it is to-day. The modern playground has been much extended towards the north, but has lost a good deal at the lower end, particularly by the building of the play-room. The old playground was 55 yards long, and to throw a ball, or one of the old thick copper pennies, over the School from the top of it, was considered something of a feat. Along the north end of the playground ran a wall, about 8 feet high, with a row of aspen poplars on the other side of it, and beyond this was a field, known to the boys as the Tatle Field, and in which the scholars of an earlier period had been accustomed to plant and dig potatoes. It was laid down in grass in Henry Dymond's day, and was so much a piece of open country that, in the summer of 1865, the writer caught a viper in it. Entered by a door at the left end of the wall was the swimming-bath. At the opposite corner formerly stood two large wooden doors, called the Great Gates, always kept fastened, but under which was carried on no inconsiderable traffic in birds' eggs, which the

village boys were glad to exchange for broken-down pocket-knives, or the rarely seen coin of the realm. Near the Great Gates stood the horizontal bar and the parallel bars, the only gymnastic apparatus then in use. Directly south of the bath stood the so-called Fives Tower, a lofty and not very sightly wall of stone, faced on the south side with red brick, and built, as the stone which the boys called the "erected" testified, in 1830, partly by scholars of that time, under the direction of Barton Dell.

The tar for making the asphalt with which Josiah Evans covered the gravel of the old playground was obtained partly from the School gas-works, and partly from those at Axbridge. The real value of tar was then undreamed of, and it could be had for little more than the asking. During this period gas-works were erected at Banwell; and many bones of animals no longer living in this country were found in making the excavation for the gas-holder. A number of these bones were placed in the Literary Society's cabinet, then an honoured store-house for objects of interest from the neighbourhood.

The man who, under Josiah Evans's direction, managed the Sidcot gas-works at this time, was the William Day already alluded to, who in his youth had been a digger of lead and calamine at Shipham. Mining had long ceased in the district when this period began; but in 1870 a Swansea firm, Messrs Hussey & Vivian, made an attempt to re-open the old industry, and sunk shafts at Shipham and Winterhead, traces of which may still be seen. They also applied to the authorities for leave to search for metal under the School estate, and a plan was drawn up by which they were to have a lease of forty years, paying a Royalty which the Committee fondly hoped "might prove a useful source of income." The agreement, however, was never signed. And although in 1872 a lease of five years was finally fixed upon, no mining work was attempted on the School land, and the scheme was dropped. The engineer in charge of the works taught for

a time in the School, giving lessons to the boys in Chemistry, and initiating some of the Staff into the use of dynamite, which they employed to blow up the stumps of some very large Scotch firs that had recently been felled near the Oakridge Lane. Three rows of such trees disappeared from the neighbouring landscape during this period. One, known by the inappropriate name of the "Upper Avenue," skirted the south side of the field called Little Chatleigh, between Winterhead and the School. A second row extended from the Haunted House in the Combe up the slope of the hill to the east. And the third stood inside the field by the Oakridge Lane, opposite the ruined farm-house buildings. Near this spot, also, was a coppice, a fine place for woodcock in the autumn.

The Meeting-house was so transformed by Josiah Evans's improvements that the building of to-day, although its main fabric is unaltered, bears little resemblance to the "barn of a place" that was erected in 1817. The old Meeting-house had no vestibule, no cloak rooms, no eaves, no ventilation, no gas. It was lighted with candles; and although there was a clock, just over the door, it did not strike, and it was an even more erratic performer than the one presented by Joseph Pease. Before the alterations, a short lane, bounded by hedges of hornbeam, ran from opposite the shed door to within a few yards of the Meeting-house door. Over the hedge on the right were the boys' gardens, then much more extensive. On the other side of the lane was a small grass paddock, enclosed by more hedges of hornbeam. Another hedge parted the whole precincts from the road. The iron railings which replaced this hedge were lost in transit, and lay for months at Yatton Station, in spite of many remonstrances addressed to the Bristol and Exeter Railway Company, whose officers failed to trace the missing property.

There was a distinct improvement in the Dietary under this administration. "On the whole," writes an old scholar who remembers this period, "I should say that the food, in

our time, was very good indeed. For breakfast we had the time-honoured bread and milk, occasionally varied by rather inferior cocoa, or still less attractive coffee, usually known as 'chicory.' For dinner we had beef or mutton, with potatoes always served in their jackets—the best of all possible ways of serving them—and sometimes with other vegetables. I still recall the nervous apprehension with which we investigated the innermost recesses of the cabbage! The pea-soup which was provided three times a week was not wholly popular; most of us liked it, but there were boys who could never abide it. It certainly was substantial. Its detractors declared that it was served out, not by the spoonful, but by the chunk! The second course consisted of puddings of various denominations:—"Mud Huts," "Stick-jaw," "Tallow," "Hemp," "Iron-clads," or "Flies-in-the-Meeting-House." "Strata Pudding" came in, I remember, with Josiah Evans's Geological Lectures.

"For supper we had cold milk, with bread, and butter or cheese or treacle. Few or no knives were provided at this meal or at breakfast, and each boy took care to bring back a good broad-bladed pocket-knife. At the beginning of each half, while we were all rejoicing in the possession of what were called "parcels," the supper-plate of a popular boy would be loaded, by admiring school-fellows, with jam, sardines, potted-meat, cake, anchovy-paste and preserved ginger, all at one and the same meal. We never had tea, except at an excursion, or on the occasion of some special treat. There was a somewhat primitive extra supper for the boys' first class, at five minutes to nine, when two boys fetched from the "slide" a jug of water, one glass, and a tin containing eighteen pieces of dry bread, which were not unfrequently thrown into the air, to be scrambled for!"

In Josiah Evans's time tea was very rarely provided; and the meal which is now rightly known by that name was called supper. In the early seventies, however, many of the girls were in the habit of making what they called tea,



on their own account. For this purpose a veritable tinman's stock of tea-pots was carried into the dining-room, and jugs of so-called hot water were arranged in line down the table, with the aid of which every damsel who was fortunate enough to possess a pot of her own, made tea for herself and her friends. The quality of the beverage, and, moreover, the condition of the table-cloth by the end of the week, may be left to the imagination. A new mistress of the girls' side, however, introduced a new order of things, and summarily put an end to the practice, not without much grumbling on the part of the disappointed tea-makers.

Meals were laid, and the relics cleared away, by waiters and "helpers," the former of whom had to wash-up after breakfast and supper; and, as the appliances were crude, the water seldom really hot, and the waiters always in a hurry, cups and plates and basins were not invariably as sweet as they might have been. Spoons were cleaned wholesale, by the simple process of putting them all together into a tin dish, with luke-warm water, and giving them a good shake-up.

The health of the scholars during these eight years was, on the whole, very good. But there were some serious cases of illness, and the School was twice prematurely dispersed, once on account of scarlatina, and once on account of diphtheria; and there were three deaths during the period.

The first death occurred in 1866, when Walter B. Farrington, a boy of ten, died of small-pox. Happily it was a solitary case. At the end of April 1870, a week after the General Meeting, which then began on the third Tuesday in that month, there was an outbreak of scarlatina, amounting to twenty-two cases, all on the girls' side. The School was broken up in consequence, assembling again on the 19th of July. In 1872 there was a good deal of trouble with mumps, a disagreeable, although not a serious malady. In March of the following year diphtheria "of a most malignant kind" broke out on the girls' side. In view of the specially dangerous character of the disease, one of the patients, Sarah



Thompson, of Dublin, was moved to Rose Cottage ; but in the absence of trained nursing, and with the inadequate remedies of the time, nothing could stay the rapid progress of the malady, and she only lived a few days. Just before the end, it occurred to Josiah Evans that the patient might at least be relieved by the liberation, in her room, of oxygen gas. The gas was promptly made, in the adjoining laboratory, but was collected in a bag which, some days before, had been filled with hydrogen for use in connection with experiments with sensitive flames. The bag, however, seemed to be quite flat and empty, and it was thought to be unlikely that, after nearly a week's interval, there could be any hydrogen left. The bag was taken into the sick-room, and its contents were being slowly liberated, on the side of the bed farthest from the fire, when there was a smart explosion. The nurse was knocked down and her arm broken, and the bag was blown to tatters. But another result of the disaster was a sudden rush of cold air into the room ; and the poor little patient, quite undisturbed by the noise and the commotion, said quietly :

“ Oh, that *was* nice ! Are you going to do that again ? ”

She died the same night. There were more cases, but for a time they were less severe. Dr Budd, of Bristol, who was called in consultation with Dr Wade, thought that the visitation was passing away, and that it was not necessary to disperse the School. Five days, however, after the issuing of a circular to that effect, another girl died, Lucy Bland, who had only been at school a few months. Her case, like that of Sarah Thompson, was a most malignant one, and Dr Wade saw at once that he could do nothing. The patient was seen at the window overlooking the girls' playground, on the very day of her death.

“ You see her ? ” said the old veteran, whose worn face betrayed how deeply he felt his powerlessness. “ You see her ? She can't live twenty-four hours. I can do nothing to save her.”

The School was then dispersed; and the drinking-water and the drainage system were both most carefully examined. The report on the former was sufficiently reassuring. "The water you sent for analysis," wrote the expert to whom samples had been submitted, "is unusually pure, and is quite free from anything of a noxious tendency. The total (solid) contents are exceedingly small, and the organic matter is entirely vegetable. There is no trace of free ammonia or sewage. It therefore possesses all the characteristics of an exceedingly good water."

(Signed) "W. W. STODDART, F.C.S."

The drains were also thoroughly investigated by Mr W. Nicholson, the Sanitary Inspector for the Axbridge Union District. He reported that the general system of drainage, the irrigation works, and the flushing arrangement from the swimming-bath were excellent. But he regarded some of the traps as imperfect, and he pronounced a drain near the girls' play-room to be defective. The smell which had been complained of in that room was, he said, due to insufficient ventilation. Subsequent excavation, however, revealed an old drain, 12 feet under the floor, and showed, also, that rats had tunnelled up from it, thus allowing sewer-gas free access to the room.

It may be observed in passing that there had been some important reforms in the drainage the year before, when an old cess-pool to the south-west of the girls' wing, which had been left empty for some years, was filled up, and new and larger pipes were laid from the house to the tank between the Five Acre and Three Acre Fields. It was in consequence of his close superintendence of these operations that Josiah Evans, who was always a most careful and conscientious clerk of the works while any alterations were in progress, was seized with a very serious illness, from which he was long in recovering.

The leisure pursuits of the scholars were maintained at a

high level during the greater part of this period, and some good work was done in Drawing and Painting. The workshop, too, was well used; and both boys and girls, but especially the girls, did some excellent things with the fret-saw. Theodore Compton still continued his greatly-appreciated visits, on Saturday mornings, and several scholars of the time allude in warm terms to the help and encouragement they received from him. "A most charming personality," writes one of his most appreciative pupils; "a face beaming with kindness and intellect; a man of catholic opinions, full of love to God and man; an accomplished artist and author, a naturalist, a theologian, and a gentleman in the best sense of the term." "He stood," says another scholar of the time, "for art and culture and for general *bonhomie*: his was the most potent influence outside the School."

Theodore Compton was abroad during part of this period; but in his absence lessons in Free-hand and Model Drawing were given by two of the Staff, and some of the boys passed the South Kensington Examination in both branches. It was now that the large pitch-pine chest for the storage of copies and materials was bought by the Society of Arts, and a library cupboard, with space for drawing-boards beneath it, was purchased by the Boys' Literary Society.

One of the great events of every half-year of this period, as of a great part of the period preceding, was the Exhibition of Drawings and Paintings, Sewing and Carpentering, held in the girls' school-room—now the reading-room. No artist of the time approached, at least while he was at School, the work of the brilliant group of the early sixties; but some very good things were done, especially in water-colours, by Joseph J. Green, Herbert Barringer, Percy Bigland and John T. Dunning, of whom the last two have adopted Art as their profession. Percy Bigland's masterly portraits, many of which have been hung in the Royal Academy, are famous for their truthfulness and power, and his portrait of Edmund Ashby is among the treasures of the School.



*Theobald Compton*





The Exhibition was followed, in the evening, by Recitations by both boys and girls, the latter of whom frequently repeated poems in chorus, half a dozen performers reciting together. These exhibitions were among the very rare occasions when boys and girls were allowed to meet, and even to speak to each other, without being accused of what was known to the Head-master as "Frivolity." There was in the School at this time a boy with a gift for the composition of topical rhymes, or parodies; and one of his stanzas survived him many years:—

"Frivolity, friendship and love,  
Divinely bestowed upon man;  
Let Jossy, so lanky and long,  
Put a stop to it all if he can!"

From 1867 to the end of this period included some of the palmiest days of the Literary Society, which then included in its scope Essay Writing, the study of Natural History and of Archæology. At least three essayists of the time have since published their writings. In Benjamin Gooch's "Life Thoughts and Lays from History," old Sidcot scholars have recognised some of the spirited ballads that were read for the first time in their youthful ears, and whose composition some of them even watched and occasionally overheard. A scholar of the period, Herbert E. Clarke, has since won high distinction in the World of Letters; and in his four volumes, "Songs in Exile," "Storm-Drift," "Poems and Sonnets," and "Tannhäuser," are to be found, not only the finest literary work achieved by any Sidcot scholar, but some of the best poetry of the close of the nineteenth century. Appealed to for his reminiscences of the time, he wrote the following:—

"DEAD SCHOOLFELLOWS.

"Their singing haunts me in silent places,  
Their youthful faces my darkness throng;  
My pulses slacken, my blood runs colder,  
They grow not older, nor cease their song.

Their bones on the prairies whiten and wither,  
 Hither and thither they swing in the sea,  
 By myriad paths they have passed Death's portal—  
 In youth immortal they live for me.

And we were of them, O friend and brother :  
 Our fate is other, our heads are gray.  
 You mid the Mendips, I in the City,  
 Which is worthier pity, friend, we or they ?

I envy those whom the prairie pillows,  
 Those whom the billows tumble and roll,  
 Who passed to the Country of no Returning  
 By desert burning or frozen Pole.

Their hearts on fire with a great endeavour,  
 They are free for ever, and unafraid  
 Of the foes that fail not, the friends that alter,  
 The faiths that falter, the hopes that fade.

H. E. C."

The naturalists of the late sixties and the early seventies were a particularly enthusiastic set, and they searched the neighbourhood in all directions in quest of birds'-eggs, insects, shells, plants and fossils. Natural History Diaries, which, as far as Friends' Schools are concerned, originated at Sidcot, began, in 1869, to supplement, if not to supplant, the collecting of specimens. Collections of birds'-eggs, indeed, were not recognised by the Literary Society of the time unless they were accompanied by careful notes of observations. A Curatorship of Archæology was established in 1868; and the masterly papers of John Lawrence, now D.Litt. of London, on the churches and the historical associations of the neighbourhood, did much to stimulate interest in what afterwards became so popular a pursuit. Great care was bestowed, at this time, upon the preparation of Essays, which were copied and recopied, in some instances half a dozen times or more, and were frequently illustrated by the writers or their friends. The reading of the essays, again, was regarded as of great importance, and was almost always carefully rehearsed beforehand. Another feature of the Literary Society's Meetings was the preparation of answers

to written "Questions," as they were called, although they more often began with some such phrase as "Give an Account of," or "Explain the Action of." These Questions were voted on; and the three that obtained the highest number of votes were answered at the following meeting, either by volunteers, or by members appointed for the purpose. Answers were usually in writing; but occasionally one was selected for oral answering, and some good speeches were the result.

It was at this period—in the year 1869—that the badger was acquired by the Society. It was brought to the School alive, and there was some difficulty about killing it. A heavy dose of prussic acid had no effect—perhaps because it was heavy, and was, as a doctor might say, "re-exhibited"—but a villager who was looking on was more successful with a pocket-knife.

The reports of the Curators were often supplemented by papers on subjects connected with their several departments. Thus, at one of the meetings, the Curators of Geology produced an essay on "Ammonites," those of Botany on "Sugar," of Meteorology on "Waterspouts," of Entomology on "Beetles," and of Ornithology, one of a series on the "Birds of the District." The Curators of Ornithology were also engaged at this time on some interesting observations of the blood-heat of birds, thinking that they might in this way find a clue to the phenomenon of Migration. In 1871, in addition to the usual four-paged Annual Report, the Society published a pamphlet of "Transactions," which included the Prize Essay of the year—an account of the Peloponnesian War, by Edward B. Marriage—and further details of Natural History work.

Readings of the Meteorological instruments, first begun by Henry Dymond, some years before, were regularly taken; although, until Joseph Pease presented the School with new thermometers and a trustworthy rain-gauge, the observers had considerable difficulties to contend with; such, for instance, as measuring the rain in a medicine-glass, and then

converting ounces into inches. The Curators of the department were so fortunate as to be able to describe, from personal observation, a magnificent water-spout which, in August 1872, was seen by the entire School to fall on the near slope of Black Down, and which did great damage in the Rowberrow Valley, besides changing, with all the earth and stones which it carried along when it burst, the course of the twin streams at Burrington. More remarkable still was the Great Meteor Shower of 13th November 1866, which was watched from the roof of the School, a most favourable spot from which to realise the full glory of that sublime and magnificent spectacle. Hour after hour, on that memorable night, the observers saw innumerable meteors traversing the sky, and weaving over it, with their glowing trails, a wonderful network of luminous lines.

At the time of the Shower, midnight although it was, two men were at work in the burial-ground by the Meeting-house, digging a grave for William Tanner, who had died at his residence at Ashley Hill, but whose remains were to be interred at Sidcot. The site of the grave was chiefly in the solid rock, and it was imperative that digging and blasting should go on night and day. The men looked up from their work to the flaming sky above them. And as they watched, they realised, as they afterwards declared, that the stars of heaven were falling, that the end of the world was actually upon them, and that there could be no need to trouble further about one solitary grave. They threw down their tools; and, from his station on the School roof, the writer saw the twinkling lights of their lanterns, as the terrified sextons tottered homeward through the darkness.

Death was indeed busy in Sidcot Meeting during this period. So many familiar figures disappeared by death or by removal to other places, that the attendance, even on Sunday morning, dwindled down to the scantiest proportions. On week-days, towards the close of this administration, it was rare to see at Meeting anyone unconnected with the



School. The death of William Tanner, who, although not a member of the Meeting, was often at Sidcot, has been already alluded to. Abraham Tanner of Winthill, died in the same year. It is said that the country people lined the whole road at intervals, from Banwell Castle to the Meeting-house, on their way to his funeral. In 1867 died William Higgins, who, long before, had been the School man-servant, and Edward Hallam, the Axbridge chemist, a relative of Hallam the historian, a highly intellectual and cultured scientist, and the great authority on the Plants of the neighbourhood. Three more of the Tanner family, once the most influential clan in the district, died in 1869; Mary Tanner on New Year's Day, Arthur Tanner in March, and Thomas—or, as he was always called, Tom Tanner—in September. Mary Tanner's death left a gap which has never been filled. Many old Sidcot scholars have testified to the benefit they received from her simple and eloquent sermons. Even to watch her, as, dressed in her modest Quaker garb, she sat at the head of the Meeting, seemed like an act of worship; while "the low tones of her gentle voice, when she rose to address her youthful audience, fell upon the ears of her listeners, like dew upon the dry and thirsty land. She was getting infirm in my time, and was very lame, but her sermons were delightful. She was a mother to us all; and many a lonely heart, such as mine was, has been cheered by her loving exhortations." Arthur Tanner of Oakridge, whose death was the result of a chill, was much missed, especially, perhaps, by those of the School Staff who, like himself, were interested in Natural History. His collection of birds of the neighbourhood, shot and stuffed by himself, was presented to the School by his widow, Margaret Tanner, who survived him thirty-five years.

Every Sidcot scholar of the sixties will remember Tom Tanner. He sat behind the boys, whose numbers were not then sufficient to fill one side of the "big" Meeting-house. The wooden partition which separated the two divisions of



the building had not then been taken down. If the Friends at the top of the Meeting were late in concluding, Tom Tanner would pull out his watch, extracting it from cavernous depths inside his waistcoat. After a brief interval he would put on his hat. If these hints were disregarded, he would impatiently scrape his feet along the floor—a proceeding which seldom failed to produce the effect he wanted. It was said that he had declared he would rather stand up to his neck in a horse-pond than read a book. Driving out of the Meeting-house yard one day, he overturned his gig against the guard-stone at the foot of one of the gate-posts; and although he got up and righted the carriage and drove home to Winthill, his knee was so severely injured that he died of lock-jaw, a few days later. “I saw him,” writes an old scholar of the time, “limping along the terrace on his way to the School for temporary assistance.” Joseph Miles of Langford, who had sat facing the Meeting for many years, died in 1875. His brother Edwin died in 1864.

Among the many visitors at the School during this period there was no other quite like Samuel Metford. He was a man of highly original and most amusing temperament, with a great gift for mimicry, and blessed with unfailing good humour. He had a fine voice, and he was always sure of an appreciative audience, both in the school-room and in the teachers’ study. The boys were never tired of a ditty with an augmenting chorus, spoken rather than sung, by “Four-and-twenty Jack Tars,” “Four-and-twenty Fiddlers,” “Four-and-twenty Parsons,” “Four-and-twenty Bull-frogs,” and others; while the elders were always glad to listen to “On Old Long Island’s Sea-girt Shore,” or “Come, bring the good old bugle, boys! Let’s have another song.” Samuel Metford’s silhouette portraits, in black and white, are known all over the West country; and they are, to compare little things with great, to old Friends’ houses in Somerset something like what Raeburn’s masterpieces are to castles in Scotland.

None of these, although nearly all members of Sidcot Meet-

ing, had had any personal connection with the School. Two Bristol Friends, however, who died during this period, had had much to do with the Institution, while one of them, George Thomas, had been Treasurer to the Committee for no fewer than thirty-two years, and had been one of its most generous benefactors. The other, Robert Charleton, had been a conspicuous figure at many General Meetings, and had taken a warm interest in the affairs of the School.

Sidcot Games were much the same under Josiah Evans as they had been during the previous administration. Cricket, however, was perhaps more scientifically played, and the fields of Five Acres and Pattenham, which were used in turn, were more frequently visited. Round-arm bowling was almost universal by the last year of the period; by far the best bowler being John Lawrence, the teacher of the third class, who was, moreover, the leading spirit in the game. "The Match," as the contest with Till-Adam Smith's School was still called, was played nearly, if not quite every year, and was won by Sidcot for the second time in 1867, when it was played in the field with the pond in it, on the Axbridge Road, on the Sidcot side of Church Lane. Matches were also played with a school at Cross, and with Henry Barron Smith's School at Weston, in both of which Sidcot was easily victorious; and with Burrington, in which they were severely beaten. Football was still the same colossal scrimmage as before, all the boys playing in one game, about five and twenty on a side; and it was still almost entirely confined to the playground.

In all the Reminiscences of all the old scholars of this and of the previous period, the Walks are among the most prominent features. Those who have forgotten the teachers, forgotten the lessons, forgotten the games, remember the Walks, as well indeed they may. What old Sidcot scholar does not recall Maxmills, with its ruined mill, its loitering river, "nurse of rushes and of reeds"; the weir and the pool below; the mill-pond and the water-wheel; the

wandering stream beyond, with its sand-pipers and kingfishers, its miller's thumbs and its lampreys? Who is there that cannot picture those old orchards, with their lichen-coated trees, their mistletoe-boughs, their tits' and nut-hatches' nests; the spruce by the river, where gold-crests used to build; the famous spring with its streams of bubbles; the swamp with its flowers and birds' nests, and its treacherous bog-holes, the trout caught in butterfly-nets, and stewed in the glue-pot, over the workshop gas? Surely the Elysian Fields could never hold more charm than those broad meadows, in the prime of summer-time, all ablaze with their multitudinous wild-flowers!

"I have a particular affection," says a scholar of the time, "for Dolbury, with its old camp, its rabbits, the fossils in its ruined ramparts. Many a shining diamond, quite as brilliant and beautiful as any I ever saw blazing in star or crescent, have I picked up among the heaps of red earth, at the mouth of some old mine-shaft. Sandford, again, was a favourite haunt of ours, for the sake of its potato-stones and its snakes and its butterflies. Snakes seem always to have had a special fascination for Sidcot boys. I remember catching a huge one, at Hale Well. I took it home to my native county, where such fearful fowl are unknown. Somehow it got loose, and was seen, several months afterwards, in a field a long way from our house, by some terrified villagers, who described it as a 'venomous warmint,' or words to that effect. They did not hurt it, however, and I managed to recover it. How well I remember the Green Hair-streaks we used to catch on Sandford, and the Clouded Yellows, which I, at least, never could catch, often as I chased them!

"Callow was not a very favourite walk, except when we went there to play football. But it had its points. There were rare shells among the screes at the foot of the cliffs, there were kestrels' nests in the cliffs themselves, there were fossils in the old walls on the top, and there were plovers'

eggs to be found on the plough-lands. There were fossils on Wavering Down, too, and flattened bullets and Snider cartridge-cases by the rifle-targets, and there was the glorious view over the moors from the top of Crook's Peak. Those moors, too, were a delightful hunting-ground. Many a Saturday afternoon have I spent among those fascinating ditches, getting back to school only just in time for tea, soaked but triumphant, loaded not only with shells for my collection, but with toothsome little eels for the stew-pot, that is to say, the glue-pot.

"Churchill Batch, again, with its tangled thickets, its snakes and slow-worms and hazel-nuts, was a delightful place on a summer afternoon. And what a view there was from the little Roman Camp on the top of it;—the closely-packed cottages of the little village in the hollow; Dolbury, with its great encampment, Roman as we thought it, then; the grey shaft of Wrington, faintly showing against the far blue hills; the white road, wandering away in the distance towards home! Is Black Down the same to-day as it was forty years since? Black Down, with its sheets of blossoming heather, the ferns in the valley at its foot, the cluster of barrows at the top of it, its bogs, with their sun-dew and cotton-grass and asphodel, its sunny slopes with their sullen adders and their active little lizards, the rugged cliff where the rock-doves used to build, the two little mountain-streams, with their ferns and foxgloves, their crystal pools and their tiny cataracts; do Sidcot boys love it now, as we loved it then? In our time, Games were, as I think, kept in their right places; a means to an end, not as the end of life, as they are now, with thousands of people. I venture to doubt if Sidcot scholars now are as well versed in Natural History, and as well-acquainted with the country round them, as we were forty years ago."

During the severe winters of this period there was much sliding on the playground. Fuller's Pond, much larger, however, in those days, afforded, prior to 1869, the only



easily accessible skating-ground. On one occasion the boys were allowed to visit the frozen brick-pits near Cross, and some of the Staff were able to avail themselves of vast fields of ice, on the flooded moors not far from Glastonbury. After the opening of the Cheddar Valley Railway, in 1869, the ponds at Congresbury and at Weston Junction were brought within reach. In the winter of 1867, the pipe that brought water into the School was burst by the frost, and the water-supply was thus entirely cut off. The disaster happened in the holidays, and the pipe was thawed and mended—not without a cataract down the boys' stairs—before it was time for the scholars to return.

An important event of this period was the Founding of the Sidcot School Old Scholars' Association, a society which has not only done much towards keeping up a pleasant connection among those who, as boys and girls, were at school together, but which has been, in various ways, very helpful to the Institution itself. The Association grew out of an informal meeting of eight old scholars—Alfred Bastin, Charles E. Boone, William C. Compton, Samuel Lawrence, John Lawrence, Robert L. Impey, George Impey, and the present writer—who on the second day of the General Meeting, in April 1870, breakfasted together at Rose Cottage. The Society was definitely founded on the corresponding day of the following year, Wednesday, the 26th of April 1871, the original Members being :

Robert L. Impey,  
Charles E. Boone,  
Francis Thompson,  
James Barringer,  
Arthur Sessions.

John Lawrence,  
Alexander Eddington,  
Edward T. Compton, and  
the writer.

According to its original Constitution the Association was “to consist of those who have left from the Boys' Side of the School since 1857, its object being to facilitate communication and to keep up a friendly connection and interest



among those who have been scholars at Sidcot." Membership was thus confined to those who had been boys at school together or who were more or less personally known to each other. The idea was that such old scholars would feel more interest in meeting together than those whose school-days had been at widely different periods, and who might be strangers to one another. The early meetings were of necessity small, but they had the merit of being, to a great extent, meetings of friends, and they were animated by a specially close feeling of brotherhood, and of kinship through our well-beloved Alma Mater. This time-limit was, however, removed in the first year of the next administration; and in the following year Membership was extended "to those who have left the School from the Girls' Side."

The second Meeting of the Association was held on the 1st of May 1872; but that of the following year was delayed till November, as there was no General Meeting in 1873, on account of illness in the School. The business, on both these occasions, was confined to the affairs of the Society itself, except that resolutions were passed, expressing the confidence of the infant Association in the condition and management of the School, and thanking "the officers of the Institution for the cordial manner in which the old scholars have been received by them."

During the General Meeting of 1871, some of the Old Scholars gave, or, rather, attempted to give, a Reading Entertainment in the Meeting-house: but the proceedings ended in a fiasco. The programme was not finished, and the assembly was abruptly dispersed. Two of the performers recited "Locheil's Warning," one taking the part of the Chieftain and the other that of the Wizard. At the point where the undaunted Highlander says:

"Go preach to the coward, thou death-telling seer!  
Or, if gory Culloden so dreadful appear,  
Draw, dotard, around thy old wavering sight,  
This mantle, to cover the phantoms of night,"—

“Locheil” tossed a plaid over his companion. No comment was made on this at the moment, but in the discussion which followed it was censured as a “Theatrical representation.” Friends were not accustomed, then, to dramatic performances of any kind. The next Reading was interrupted by a Friend well known and greatly respected, who rose in much agitation to declare, with reference to the extract that the reader had chosen, that if the Devil had decided to do the most harm he could, he could have adopted no better plan. It is hardly necessary to add that there were no more Readings or Recitations that day. So ended, after a stormy debate, and some strong language, the first attempt of Sidcot Old Scholars to entertain Friends at the time of the General Meeting.

There were several changes in the School property during Josiah Evans’s time. In 1867 a plot of ground adjoining the Mouzney Estate, and measuring 3 ac. 0 r. 11 p., was bought for £282. In 1869 all the Copy-hold lands near the School, 28 acres in all, were made Free-hold, at a cost of £417, 12s. 9d.—largely owing to the exertions of Richard and George Tangye, who collected the necessary funds. In 1872 the Harborough Field, between Five Acres and Axbridge Road, was bought by two Friends and offered to the Committee. This also was Copy-hold, and the purchase and enfranchisement together cost the Institution £338, 8s. 6d. On the other hand, the Havyatt Estate passed out of the possession of the School in 1868, when it was sold for £1650, with a view to paying off some of the debt, which was still a heavy burden on the finances.

In consequence, to some extent, of outbreaks of illness, the number of scholars was low in the early years of this period. At the General Meeting of 1866, Josiah Evans’s first year, the total was 62—43 boys and 19 girls. In 1867 the figures were somewhat better—42 boys and 29 girls, or 71 in all. From that time forward the numbers steadily rose; and in the seventies the School was quite full, with 90 or 91

scholars. In 1871 there were 25 names on the list for admission. The cost per head was high throughout the period, and was highest—£35, 8s. 8d.—in the financial year 1865-1866, partly owing to the small number of scholars, and partly to the increased cost of provisions and a heavy outlay for necessary repairs. In 1871, when the cost per head was £32, 3s. 5d., a charge of £2, 10s. was made for the first time, as an “estimated equivalent for rent.” The lowest figure—£28, 7s. 9d. per head—was reached in 1868-1869, when there were 87 scholars in the School. Of the two chief items in the cost, salaries and provisions, it is curious that the former fell, during this period, from £9, 16s. 6d. to £7, 16s. 9d. per head, while the latter rose from £13, 6s. 6d. to £15, 18s.

Owing to increased numbers and to good management—and in one case to legacies amounting to more than £1000—the balance was on the right side for four years out of the eight. But the financial position in the last year of the period was bad indeed. Not only was there a deficit of £223, 5s. 2d., but there was a sum of more than a thousand pounds due to the treasurer. On the other hand, the debt was only about half what it had been. When Josiah Evans took command the School owed £3720. When he resigned only £1750 remained, exclusive, however, of the sum due to the treasurer. The Annual Subscriptions continued steadily to fall, and sank from £182, 8s. 6d. to £156, 19s. 6d.

Several attempts were made, both to improve the income and to diminish the expenditure. An instance of the latter was in 1872, when it was decided that repairs to clothing should no longer be paid for by the School. In the same year the Rates of Payment were revised. The minimum fee from the Associated Meetings was fixed at £14, and from the Non-Associated Meetings at £25 per head. In 1869 the rents of lands at Bridgwater and Mouzney were raised. In 1868 the annuity that, for more than forty years, had been paid to the family of Dr Pope, came to an end, freeing the School

from a payment of £100 a year. It will be remembered that so far back as 1827 Dr Robert Pope, of Staines, gave £2000 to the Institution, on condition of receiving £100 a year "during the lives of himself, of his wife Margaret Pope, and of his daughter Margaret Pope, and of the survivors and survivor of them." The principal was invested in twenty £100 shares of the Grand Surrey Canal, which then paid 5 per cent. per annum. Three years later, however, the Canal Company lowered their rate of interest to 4 per cent., at the same time paying a small sum by way of compensation. And from 1830 to 1852, when the bonds were sold for £1800—after many vain attempts to dispose of them—the School received only about £77 per annum, to set against the £100 a year which they paid to the family of Dr Pope. The Institution had thus lost about £700 in all, when a legacy of £1000 from Margaret Pope, the last survivor,—a legacy reduced to £900 by the duty,—more than made things straight.

Josiah and Mary Hannah Evans left in 1873 to become Heads of Ackworth School; and both the Sidcot Committee, and the larger gathering at the General Meeting, made Minutes expressive of their high appreciation of the services the retiring Superintendents had rendered to the School. There can be no doubt that these services were of a high order. No former master had done so much for the advancement of the School; no previous mistress had ever more carefully watched over the health and comfort of those about her.

"Peace be to them! Eternal peace and rest,  
And the fulfilment of the great behest,  
'Ye have been faithful over a few things,  
Over ten cities shall ye reign as kings.'"







H. J. Gray, London

Edmund Ashby

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FROM PERCY BIGLAND'S PORTRAIT

## CHAPTER X

EDMUND ASHBY, 1873-1902

THE long administration of Edmund Ashby, which lasted for no fewer than twenty-nine years, was characterised by such sweeping changes and such great reforms, that those who have only known the School in its present prosperous condition can have little idea of what it was when his government began. Josiah Evans did great things for Sidcot. He was the first of the reformers. But he was hampered throughout the whole of his mastership by an inadequate revenue ; and although he accomplished not a little, he was compelled, for want of means, to leave much more untouched. In his time the school-rooms were small and ill-appointed. The only separate class-room was that which was built on the boys' side in 1861. The bedrooms were badly ventilated, and were too crowded to be sanitary. There was no means of isolating cases of infectious disease. There was no laboratory worth the name. There were only the most trivial appliances for gymnastic exercises, and physical training was altogether ignored in the curriculum. The swimming-bath was small and ill-constructed. There was no proper laundry. The gas-works were old and inefficient. There was no regular playing-field. Both Five Acres and Pattenham, in which cricket was occasionally played, were quite unsuited for the purpose, and were used by the boys alone. For football in the field there was no provision whatever. The accommodation for the teachers was scant and comfortless. By day they used two small rooms, one on each side of the house, into which the sun seldom shone ; and at

night they occupied corners of the general dormitories, partially enclosed by wooden partitions not greatly larger than those of the scholars. Co-education is now so familiar a feature of the School that it is not easy to realise a time when boys and girls were kept strictly and monastically apart. Music and Singing and Dramatic Representations, which form an important part of the School life of to-day, would not have been tolerated for a moment by the Committee or the General Meeting of Josiah Evans's time. The Scholarships which now enable both boys and girls to continue elsewhere the education they have received at Sidcot had not yet been heard of. And in those days the idea of a fund for bestowing pensions upon teachers for long and honourable service would have been regarded as savouring of Utopia.

Under Emund Ashby's government all this was changed. During those twenty-nine years the School buildings were enlarged and improved by a series of alterations which cost far more than the whole original fabric of 1837 and 1838. New class-rooms, new dormitories, new laboratory, new bath, new gas-works, new rooms for the teachers, more space in the dining-room, so that the entire family could take their meals together, music-rooms, gymnasium, laundry, sanatorium and disinfecting-apparatus, more space in the playgrounds, tennis-courts for the girls, and a playing-field large enough for the whole School; these are among Edmund Ashby's memorable reforms. At the same time the educational system was re-organized; first, by means of Departmental Teaching, so that masters and mistresses might give lessons in the subjects they knew best; and then, if not by Co-education, at least by Joint Teaching, which, to that extent gave, for the first time in the School's history, equal advantages to both boys and girls. Under the new order of things, Music and Singing were not merely tolerated, but were regularly taught. Towards the cost of these improvements, both structural and constitutional, many friends of the School generously contributed. But the greater portion of the work

was rendered possible by what was therefore perhaps the most important of Edmund Ashby's reforms,—that remodeling of the financial system which at length lifted the Institution out of the ruts of inadequate revenue which had retarded its progress almost from the very commencement, and relieved it from the debt which had hampered it so long.

Many teachers came and went, in the course of nearly thirty years; and it would be a difficult and almost an impossible task to attempt to sketch the portraits of all, although never so lightly. Of those who are conspicuous in the Reminiscences of old scholars of the time, some are remembered for the good work they did, some because of their incapacity, some solely for the sake of their eccentricities. From 1874 to 1881 the writer of this History, who had served as a junior during seven out of the eight years of the previous period, was teacher of the boys' first class, and head of the boys' side. The second in command, for nearly the whole time, was Joseph Lane. Two prominent juniors were Henry Lawrence and William Henry Alexander. There were other masters who made but brief stay in the School, and who left no very vivid memories behind them. After 1881 the introduction of Departmental Teaching brought about a revolution in the management. The chief power was no longer delegated to one man; and three officers, Joseph Lane, Henry R. Clark and Basil P. Megahy, shared between them, with the assistance of subordinates, the principal part of both teaching and discipline.

Joseph Lane, now Secretary to the School, in which he has seen altogether thirty-four years' service, is remembered by many old scholars for his patient and painstaking methods, and particularly for his Singing Lessons, the first which had ever been given at Sidcot. Henry R. Clark, the most successful Art Master in the history of the School, has been a Sidcot teacher since 1881. Basil P. Megahy, who taught from 1881 to 1896, raised the Teaching of Science to a high level of excellence; and is further remembered for his arduous

in the games and for the unselfish energy with which he devoted himself to the boys' interests in their leisure time.

The Reminiscences of old scholars contain many allusions to these and to other masters of the period—some flattering, some the reverse. Some of the men left vivid impressions on the minds they trained, or tried to train; some have passed almost entirely out of recollection.

There are not a few affectionate allusions to Henry Lawrence, a young teacher who, after being at Sidcot, took his degree of M.A. at London University, but whose promising career was cut short by an early death.

"Everybody liked 'Ken,'" writes one old boy who knew him. "I remember him well," writes another of the same period; "small, alert, with masterful blue eyes, and a quiet, self-possessed, dignified manner. A true leader of boys, was Henry Lawrence, as I recall him. His authority was maintained with very little punishment, for order always reigned where he strode gallantly along."

Of another junior master of the time, a scholar of some few years later writes: "He was the one teacher who, in my days, shared our sports. He played Cricket and Football, he was the leader on the long slides on the playground. Who that knew him will forget his abounding vigour, his high spirits, his loud and hearty laugh? He was the soul of unselfishness and good humour; a big boy himself, and capable—perhaps naturally, since he was an Irishman—of quick flashes of temper. It was harmless, and short-lived. But, looking back over close on thirty years, it seems to render clearer by contrast the wonderful absence of temper everywhere else."

Before he came to Sidcot, R., another of the four Irishmen who served under Edmund Ashby, had been a sailor; and his songs of the sea, and his tales of life on ship-board, together with his brogue and his eccentricities, were a constant source of delight to the boys. But the lessons he gave, or tried to give, were another affair altogether. One



afternoon, after a stormy lesson, punctuated by much disorder and by many impositions, one of his class, who, during the weary hour, had learnt nothing and suffered much, called out in despairing tones: "Oh, I say, Mr R., whatever is the use of Algebra?"

"A very great deal of use," replied the undaunted Irishman. "Suppose ye had an estate in America, and ye didn't know the value of it, ye c'd say, 'Let  $x$  equal the value of that estate,' and there ye are!"

Another day, early in the morning, before the boys had been called, R. heard somebody whistling, and ordered him to stop. The performer took no notice, and his name was demanded. Still no notice. R. got out of bed, and marched round the room, questioning all boys who were awake, but without discovering the offender, who, by this time, was quiet. Evidence pointed, however, to a boy who was asleep; really sound asleep. R. roused him: "Ye were whistling," said he. "Well, sir," said the drowsy culprit, yawning; "if I was I didn't know it." "Well, ye were," replied R., whose temper had not been improved by patrolling in his night-shirt; "and ye'll write me fifty lines." There was a disapproving chorus of "Oh, Oh!" from the rest of the room, now very much awake. R. hesitated. He was a kind-hearted soul, for all his oddities. "Well," he said, at length; "I'll let ye off this time, but ye must be more careful what ye do in your sleep, in future!" After he left Sidcot, R. taught in a school in Dublin, where he got on well in spite of the fact that his class were in the habit of occasionally stopping a lesson to give three cheers for Parnell.

"What shall I say of Q.?" writes a scholar who entered Sidcot thirty-four years ago, "Q., that born teacher and leader of boys. How many men, I wonder, not only throughout the length and breadth of England, but all the world over, have reason to remember Q.? How many men see birds and beasts and flowers and insects that they would never have noticed, but for him, and have learnt something of

Nature and her children because of the love for her which he first planted in their hearts? I remember how, at the close of a long expedition, a party of us lay stretched on the sand-hills by the shore at Brean, looking at the sunset, before we climbed into the clumsy cart that was to carry us back to Sidcot; and how Q. drew our attention to the beauty of the glowing sky, repeating, as he did so, a verse of poetry that might have been written to fit in with what we saw. It is more than thirty years since; but I have never forgotten the lines or the scene.

“I remember a story about him, connected with the first of April. The fellow who ought to have sounded the 7 o'clock bell for morning school had neglected his duty, remembering what day it was, and suspecting tricks. Up came Q., and seized the bell. But it was just as the rightful bellman had anticipated. Some one had stuffed a duster into it, and it was as dumb as an oyster. We were all, that is to say, the three lower classes, in the schoolroom. Q. marched in. ‘Who did that?’ he demanded. There was no need to specify more particularly. Every fellow in the room knew what had happened. The boy who had gagged the bell, not, of course, meaning it for Q. at all, held his hand up: ‘I did, sir.’ ‘Very well,’ said Q. ‘Two can play at that game. You can write me 50 lines out of the Fifth Catiline Oration, and in your best writing, remember. You can borrow a book from one of the first class.’ The poor little chap burst into tears. Fifty lines of Latin, and in his best handwriting, was no joke. But Q. was inexorable, and marched off to his class. After breakfast the top boy brought the tearful culprit a copy of Cicero, showed him that such a thing as a Fifth Catiline Oration did not exist, and finished up by asking him if he knew what day it was. The tears were promptly changed to smiles, which lasted more or less all day, —especially if Q. happened to be anywhere near.”

For the first eight years of this period the method of Education remained much the same as it had always been.

That is to say, each teacher was in charge of one particular class, and gave lessons to it in all the subjects of the curriculum. The first class teacher on each side of the house was regarded as in command of that side, and was responsible to the Head-master for its good order and government. But after Mid-summer 1881 there was an entire change in the Staff arrangements; and a system of Departmental Teaching was organised which prevailed for fourteen years. Under this system each side was divided into an Upper and a Lower School. The Upper School was divided into three classes, each of which, again, was in two sections, thus forming six divisions. As regards the boys' side, the teaching of English, French and Latin was placed in the hands of one senior master, Science and Geography were in the charge of another, and Mathematics—except for the higher branches, which were taught with most marked and brilliant success by the Head-master himself—were in the care of a third. At the same time was appointed the first Master-on-Duty, who, in addition to his other duties, taught History throughout the Upper School. Since each master took entire charge of his own subject or subjects, the lessons were naturally made continuous from class to class, and there was thus little danger of any part being missed. Some of the work was of necessity entrusted to subordinates, who were responsible to the Departmental master or mistress. In the same way, instead of having a single master responsible for the order of the whole boys' wing, the duties were shared by the same three who divided the teaching, and the subordinates were responsible to them.

The old system, under which a teacher was kept in close touch with a class, day after day throughout the half-year, had therefore to be abandoned. This, as the authorities felt, was a serious drawback to the scheme. Under the former plan, a teacher who, in school-hours, at any rate, was constantly with the same class, was likely to get to know them intimately. He had many opportunities of influencing

them. He was closely identified with all their interests. There was every probability that they would become strongly attached to him. Such a happy state of things could not possibly prevail when the class was handed over to a fresh instructor for almost every subject; and there was a danger that a class might feel that it had no teacher of its own at all. With the object of trying to guard against this danger, it was arranged that each form should have its own recognised master or mistress, who should have entire charge of the Scripture lessons and of the class-registers, who should write full and confidential reports to the Head-master on the progress and conduct of the individual members of the class, and who should have the oversight of the leisure-time pursuits of the scholars, their reading, their literary and scientific and other similar occupations.

Latin was at this time taught throughout the Upper School: the first class reading Virgil or Horace or Livy, the second Cæsar, and the third Phædrus. But in response to the urgent representations of many parents, the General Meeting agreed to allow the boys an option of taking Latin or an extra Science subject, with the expectation that classes who were interested in language and literature would make more rapid progress when liberated from the presence of those whose tastes were in another direction; and that those who, on the other hand, were never likely to be able to acquire classical knowledge of any real value, might spend the time to more advantage on scientific subjects. The result was disappointing. The number of parents who selected Latin for their sons was so small that the classes were with difficulty maintained. Moreover, those who passed on to Bootham, or who wished to pass public examinations, in which Latin was an essential, found the want of it a serious difficulty. A reaction followed, and Latin was, in great measure, restored to its former status.

Departmental Teaching continued, without material change, for fourteen years. On several occasions, during that time,



the teaching of boys and girls together had been discussed by the Committee. And in 1893 the Head-master was directed to visit those Friends' Public Schools in which Joint Teaching had been adopted, with the object of consulting the officers of those institutions and of seeing how the system worked.

But although Edmund Ashby's conclusion after going thoroughly into the question with the authorities of Penketh and Rawdon was that the advantages of the system quite outweighed some possible disadvantages, the Sidcot Committee resolved to make no immediate change, but to use opportunities as they arose—such as the appointment of a new teacher—and to introduce the system by degrees. It was, indeed, two years before the first step was taken. In 1895 the highest class in Mathematics on each side of the house was united, under the teaching of the Head-master himself. Shortly afterwards the lowest class on each side was joined, and placed under a mistress, and in 1897 Joint Teaching was, as regarded morning work, adopted throughout the School.

The afternoon classes were still taught separately, with the idea of keeping masters and mistresses in touch with their respective forms. It was also arranged that the scripture teaching, and other special points which had been reserved under the Departmental system, should still remain in the hands of the master or mistress of each particular form. Any difficulty in discipline was also to be referred to them. The new method naturally involved a re-arrangement of subjects, such as allowing time for chemistry and woodwork for the boys, and for physiology, hygiene and needle-work for the girls. Very little opposition to the scheme was shown by parents. A few girls who would otherwise have come to Sidcot were not sent, in consequence: and there were a few parents who preferred that their sons should be taught by men.

The intermingling of boys and girls was still confined to school hours. They did not take their meals together, or



play together: and the Literary Societies were still quite separate and distinct. After Edmund Ashby left these restrictions and limitations were withdrawn. It was not until boys and girls were allowed to associate in all their various occupations, both in school and out, that Co-Education can be said to have been fully adopted.

“There was no Departmental Teaching in my time,” writes a scholar of the seventies. “Each master kept his own class, week in, week out, the whole year round, teaching them all the subjects set down in the curriculum, helping them, too, in their leisure pursuits, joining in their games, and heading the charge when they stormed the enemy’s position in the fir-cone fights at Banwell Tower. He was their chief, their leader; and if he deserved it—and sometimes even if he did not deserve it—he was not only obeyed by his little clan, but honoured and revered.

“Nor were there any Mixed Classes of boys and girls. Boys and girls never came near each other, in fact, except at games played on special holiday occasions. Relatives, it is true, met once or twice a week. I well remember how my sisters and I used to march uncomfortably round and round the terrace, in view of all the front windows. There was, of course, some interchange of notes and messages and presents, a thing I never had a hand in; although I can recall a long lecture on the subject from the Head-master, who, as he marched me up and down the playground, a cynosure for all my wondering comrades, pointed out to me the impropriety of trying to make love, and the sin of sending surreptitious letters to the girls’ side. I was so entirely guiltless that I was not very quick in apprehending the Head-master’s meaning. As far as I was concerned there had been no love-making, no messages, no communication of any sort whatever. How could there be, for a boy who found all girls, except sisters, embarrassing and unnecessary?

“Not all my companions, however, were equally innocent. I remember how one of the first class, a curly-headed, blue-

eyed young Adonis, who has since made a mark in the world, sent to one of the girls—his goddess of the passing hour—a silver pencil-case. This was either confiscated, or surrendered. I rather think the damsel gave it up. Anyhow, it was brought to the boys' first class teacher, who fastened it to his watch-chain. And the same afternoon, in the course of a lesson, he stopped in front of the culprit's desk, twirling the intercepted love-token in his fingers. I shall never forget the expression on young Curly-wig's face, as, looking up and seeing the precious pencil ostentatiously displayed before his eyes, he realised what had happened. He told me afterwards that nothing more came of it, and that the master handed his rejected offering back to him without a word."

As has been noticed in previous chapters, the School had, for many years before this time, been examined, at somewhat irregular intervals, by outside experts. Two of these, William Pengelley and Thomas Hunton, were members of the Society. Others were British School Inspectors, or Examiners appointed by the Cambridge Syndicate. It is characteristic of this period, when so many features of school-life were more thoroughly organised, that these outside examinations now became regular and more systematic. The Rev. T. J. Sanderson, who visited the School in 1875, 1877, and 1879, was the most efficient and helpful examiner ever sent to Sidcot by the authorities at Cambridge. In 1879 Mr Sanderson examined all the Friends' Public Schools; and his Report was read before an Educational Conference in London, which was attended by some of the Sidcot Committee. After hearing the Report, the Conference agreed to recommend that opportunities should be given to teachers for the preparation of lessons, that more time should be devoted to the study of modern languages, that the younger classes should be taught by women, and that schools should be periodically examined by professional inspectors.

Mr Sanderson's last visit to Sidcot was paid at a time

when, in such subjects as then constituted the curriculum, the Institution had reached a high state of efficiency.

The Latin Composition book of the time was Smith's "Principia, Part IV,"—a good stiff book, as those who have been through it may admit. The first class had taken special pains with their Latin that year, and had done nearly all the exercises. The Examiner wrote up on the black-board a long string of English sentences to be turned into Latin, and then sat down for a chat with the master of the class. The boys had plenty of work before them. In a few minutes, however, he became aware that the boys were all sitting with their hands down. "Oh," he said, rather anxiously; "I'm afraid those examples have been too much for them." But when he got up and walked round the desks, he found the work all done. The Examiner was specially struck with the Arithmetic of the same class. "I have seldom," he wrote in his Report to the Committee, "seen such excellence of work in any school."

The University authorities refused to send Mr Sanderson a fourth time to the same school; and as the next Cambridge examiner did not favourably impress the Sidcot Committee—although his report was a flattering one—it was decided to invite Fielden Thorp "to spend some time at the School . . . and to make such suggestions as appear to him desirable." He came in May 1882, and it is on record that his Report elicited much interesting discussion.

Within a few months of Fielden Thorp's visit, two sets of examinations were instituted. One of these, by the South Kensington Science and Art Department, in which a limited number of scholars were examined in special subjects, such as Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics, and Freehand and Model Drawing, was, for a long period, held yearly. The other, more general in its character, an examination of the Upper School by the College of Preceptors, was held yearly from 1883 to 1888. From that date it was biennial until 1900, when it was superseded by the Cambridge Local

Examinations. The School records show a long series of successes in both sets of examinations. In 1892 the School received £52 in grants from South Kensington; and in 1895, when Sidcot was recognised by the Department as a Science School, the grant amounted to £210. It is a significant fact that in 1899, when no examination was possible, owing to interruption from illness, a grant of more than £50 was made to the Institution, "in view of the success of the class in former years." The establishment of the South Kensington Examinations suggests, what was indeed the case, that much time was now devoted to the teaching of Science. In 1895, the year in which Sidcot was a recognised Science School, the laboratory was fitted up under the personal supervision of a South Kensington Inspector, Dr Ball, and three other experts, who came with the express object of giving advice about methods and arrangements and time-tables. Sidcot was a Recognised Science School for one year only. The Department required that a certain definite number of lessons of a specified length should be given in the week, none of them to be in the evening. When, however, joint classes were introduced, it was found impossible to conform to the requirements of the Department, and the plan was, with great reluctance, abandoned.

Except for the brief period between 1825 and 1832, when five pounds a year was spent by the Committee in rewards to scholars, no prizes were given at Sidcot, to either boys or girls, for success in school-work, until 1873, when George Palmer of Reading offered to give five pounds yearly, during his life, to the "two highest boys in the School at the time of the General Meeting." Two years later this was followed by the offer, by an anonymous donor, of a similar sum for the girls. Another and much greater prize was offered in 1877. This was a Scholarship of sixty pounds a year for three years, tenable at Owens College, Manchester, given by those generous friends of the Institution, Richard and George Tangye. In 1883, when the Tangye Scholarship



was decided by the result of the College of Preceptors' Examination, it was gained by Gilbert J. Fowler, who was 17th out of 8000 candidates, and who has since won distinction by his work for the Manchester Corporation, and for the Government of India.

In 1888 the School established a Scholarship scheme of its own. Two scholarships of fifty pounds a year each, one for each side of the house, were to depend upon the position of the candidates in the School, their success in any public examination and in the School examination, their work in the laboratory, the art class, the Literary Society and the workshop, in needle-work and in music, and in the part they took in games or other pursuits of leisure time. At a later period it was agreed to give a preference to candidates who had been not less than two years in the School.

A change quite as revolutionary as the establishment of Joint-Teaching was the introduction of Instrumental Music into the curriculum. Class-Singing became a regular part of the programme quite early in the period; and at the School Entertainments songs began to supplement the simple recitation of poetry. Ten years, however, elapsed after Edmund Ashby's accession before the first piano was installed in the School. Instrumental Music had, it is true, been taught much earlier, but not in the actual building. It happened, in 1875, that a girl at the top of the School, a girl of specially good influence, whom the authorities were anxious to retain as long as possible, was about to leave because she would have no opportunity of learning Music while she stayed at Sidcot. To get over the difficulty, her father offered to present a piano for the purpose of regular school instruction; and Richard Tangye, with his accustomed generosity, offered another. At that time, although there were pianos in many Friends' houses, there was none in any of the Public Schools, and many Friends still strongly objected, on principle, to Music in any form. Another argument against it was that Friends had always enjoyed the reputation of



giving what they called a sound and solid education, especially to girls; and that it was to be feared that the time and energy which would be spent on Music would interfere with studies of more importance. Many Sidcot Scholars will remember the remark—many times repeated—of a Friend who took part in a discussion of the question, during the General Meeting long before this time: "My objection to Music is the time it takes and the noise it makes."

The Committee discussed the offer of the two pianos and the question of the introduction of Music into the School seriously and long. But they were so divided in opinion that they could come to no decision. And, as they did not feel "prepared to take the responsibility of accepting the offer," they laid the case before the General Meeting. But the Friends who formed that year's General Meeting were also so evenly divided that they, in their turn, could form no definite conclusion, and they referred the vexed problem back to the Committee, where views were as much at variance as ever, and the whole matter was fairly at a dead-lock.

At this juncture, in order in some degree to help the School out of its difficulty, Mary Anna Clark, of Combe House, invited a few of the girls to meet a music-teacher, in her drawing-room, on Saturday afternoons; and, to quote the words of one who knew the circumstances well, "perhaps few lessons were ever given or received with greater zeal." Thus was the thin end of a memorable wedge gently and unostentatiously introduced.

Years passed, and the number of pupils increased. But, in the summer of 1880, the Committee, having decided that they could no longer tax Mrs Clark's generosity, agreed to allow the music-mistress to rent the cottage in the Long Garden, and to provide pianos at her own expense. All fees were to be paid direct to her, and all lessons were to be given in play-hours. The wedge was thus driven a little farther home. The new plan did not, however, prove wholly satisfactory;

and two years later, early in 1883, just when the authorities were considering what course they could adopt, the music-mistress tendered her resignation. The Committee thereupon convoked a Special General Meeting, once more to consider the question of teaching Music in the School. The assembly duly met, in Bristol. But the Clerk of the General Meeting having given it as his opinion that the Sidcot Committee had no power to convene a General Meeting, and this view having been supported by other Friends, it was agreed that the conclave should be regarded merely as a conference. Long and animated discussion followed, and there was wide divergence of opinion. In the end, however, the Clerk ruled that the preponderance of feeling was in favour of introducing Music, and the School Committee resolved to lose no time in making the necessary arrangements. Music-rooms were built, pianos were bought—both the rooms and the instruments were, in time, paid for by the pupils' fees—and the teaching of Music became a fully recognised part of the curriculum. At the ensuing General Meeting the Committee explained the circumstances under which their hands had thus been forced; and the arrangements which had been made were sanctioned with hardly a dissentient voice.

Another prominent educational feature of this period was the development of Gymnastic and Physical Training. In 1885 two ladies, one of them a native of Sweden, introduced the Swedish method of drill on the girls' side. So ably were the lessons given, and so well were they followed, that a number of Sidcot girls gave, with distinguished success, illustrations of Swedish Drill before an audience largely composed of Bristol doctors. About the same period a drilling-master from Weston was employed on the boys' side. There was a great change in 1890, when a fine gymnasium having been built by the School, and equipped by the Old Scholars' Association, a professional gymnastic teacher from Weston was engaged to teach both boys and girls. Four years later a lady took charge of the Physical

Training of the girls, and gave them lessons in Gymnastics and Swimming, as well as in Wood-carving. Before the close of the period all the Physical Training was directed by trained members of the now enlarged regular resident Staff. In connection with this subject, reference may here be made to the greatly increased facilities for bathing, which were provided during Edmund Ashby's administration, and which resulted in its being a rare thing for a boy to leave school without having learnt to swim.

Drawing and Painting, Carving and Wood-work, which formerly had been, in the main, leisure-time pursuits, now became part of the regular school curriculum. For some years, in the early portion of this period, Theodore Compton continued those welcome Saturday morning visits, which had borne such good fruit in Josiah Evans's time. "Never shall we forget," writes an old scholar of the seventies, "never shall we forget Theodore Compton, our loved and gifted voluntary teacher of drawing and painting. Hundreds of sketchers up and down the country, and in distant corners of the empire, owe much to his patient and skilful training."

One young artist of the time, Robert L. Clark, has since gained distinction as a sculptor.

In 1880 Mr Blacker, of Manchester, gave lectures to the Staff on the Teaching of Drawing; and in the same year, the Old Scholars' Association, having offered to pay the salary of a professional art-master, and to provide suitable models and copies, Mr J. Pearse, one of the masters at the Bristol School of Art, was engaged to give weekly lessons on both sides of the house. This arrangement, which was greatly appreciated, lasted two years, when Mr Pearse left Bristol. In the following year the Association were obliged, for lack of funds, to discontinue their subsidy; and, during the greater part of the period, Drawing and Painting were very successfully taught by Henry R. Clark, one of the senior masters on the regular school Staff.

For some years Sidcot scholars of this time had the great

advantage of learning wood-carving under Mr Edward Halliday, of Wells. The carving shown by Mr Halliday's class—chairs and tables, cabinets, music-stools and book-shelves, many of which were real works of art—formed some of the most striking features of the Industrial Exhibition for all the Friends' Public Schools, which was held at Ackworth, in 1880. And it is probable that there never came out of the School workshop finer specimens of turnery than the chess-men shown by Howard Sturge at the same exhibition. They not only gained prizes there and at Sidcot, but were awarded a silver medal by the Falmouth Polytechnic Institute. There was a time, however, during this period, when interest in handicrafts and in leisure pursuits generally sank to a very low ebb. In 1887, for example, we find the Old Scholars' Association regretting that while the drawing and painting that had been done under the eye of the Art Master was deserving of high praise, very little had been accomplished in leisure time. In the same report it was noted that while the wood-carving was good, the joinery was decidedly the reverse. Things were even worse in 1892, when there were "no exhibits whatever of carpentry or carving." And although this was declared to be "entirely unworthy of the prestige of the School," several years were destined to elapse before the workshop recovered its old importance.

At a later time, when the use of tools was systematically taught in school-hours, and when much better provision, in the form of separate benches and appliances, was made for learners, the workshop made great advance. A feature of the instruction was a series of graduated exercises, which included the drawing of plans to scale, the making of wood-work joints, and many other forms of plain and practical carpentry. Care was taken not to discourage the wood-carvers; but these soon realised the value of the systematic training, and the more showy but less useful work was in great measure dropped.



Natural History pursuits of various kinds came into favour and went out again, as they are apt to do in schools. The early part of the period was distinguished by the ardour shown in many branches, and by the keeping of Diaries of Observations, which had been begun under Josiah Evans, and was now maintained with great spirit, especially by the Ornithologists, who were encouraged to make notes instead of taking birds' eggs. A nest of thirteen quail's eggs, found near the School, in June 1876, is believed to be the first ever recorded for this part of Somerset. The Entomologists were so fortunate as to happen on several well-marked Clouded Yellow years. The Geologists obtained many good fossils, not only in the Carboniferous Limestone of the district, in which, in particular, many Trilobites were found, but also in the Lias of Dunball and Wolverhill. The Botanists, who kept careful tables of the first appearances of flowers, recorded several previously un-noted species; such, for instance, as the rare *Trinia vulgaris*, first in Hutton Combe in 1875, and, later, on most of the surrounding hills; *Epipactis palustris*, at Maxmills, in 1874, and *Epipactis latifolia*, on Sandford, in 1877; the Deptford Pink, near Brockley, in 1879; and *Lycopodium clavatum*, on Black Down, in 1874. Many remarkably good collections of plants were formed; and it is probable that no more striking botanical collections were ever seen at Sidcot than the preparations illustrative of the structure and classification of plants, made at this time, by boys and girls, at the suggestion and under the encouragement of the Head-master, who was himself an enthusiastic botanist.

Natural History excursions, in search of birds and insects, shells and plants and fossils, were made to Brockley, Ebbor, Brean Down, Bridgwater and the Peat Moors, while walks to Black Down, Burrington, Sandford, Churchill, Maxmills, Hale, Callow, and more rarely to Cheddar, had all their special charms for Nature-lovers, who, in the early part of the period, scoured the neighbourhood in all directions in



pursuit of their various interests, often in company with the Head-master or some of the teachers. Cave-hunting, as Boyd Dawkins called it, of which there had been something in Josiah Evans's time, came into fashion; and Goatchurch and other caverns at Burrington were now thoroughly explored, not only by members of the Staff, but, it has since been whispered, by some of the boys,—who did not talk of them. Nor was Archæology forgotten, although the study of Church architecture, since so popular, then attracted comparatively little attention. Many of the ancient hill-forts of Mendip were examined; excavations in search of antiquities were made on Dolbury, and some very interesting Roman relics were obtained at the ancient mining settlement at Charterhouse-on-Mendip. Visits were paid to the Stone Circles of Stanton Drew, to Athelney, the Field of Sedgemoor, Wells Cathedral, Glastonbury Abbey and Woodspring Priory. Later in the period enthusiasm in such subjects waned. And on more than one occasion, in the Report which they presented to the General Meeting, the School Committee expressed regret that Natural History attracted comparatively little attention.

Nature Study, now so popular and so well taught at Sidcot, formed then no part of the curriculum. Like the carpentering of those days, it was entirely an occupation for leisure time. But the scholars of that age, although they are no doubt more or less grateful for what they learnt in school hours, seldom or never allude in their Reminiscences to French or Latin, to Mathematics or History, or any other of the regulation lessons. Of the knowledge of Nature that they gained, however, many of them speak in the warmest terms. Nor can there be any doubt that some of the best naturalists of the time, who have since distinguished themselves in fields quite unconnected with the study of plants or animals, owe something of their success to the training in keen and careful observation which they went through as boys at Sidcot.



THE SCHOOL FRONT



"If the boys of my time could be canvassed," writes a scholar of the seventies, "I have no manner of doubt that there would be a general agreement that the best of the Sidcot life was that part of it which was directly connected with Nature. The priceless privilege of rambling over the country, free from all restrictions, laid the foundation for a pure love of Nature and of the clean, unfettered life of the open air. Every old scholar bears the same testimony. Every Sidcot schoolboy has in his soul a whole series of strings which, when they are touched—by a picture, a thought, a random word, a flash of memory—call up, as by the wand of a magician, visions of those happy, far-off days. And the strings are Hale Well, Maxmills, Daffodil Valley, Churchill Batch, Sandford, Burrington, Brean Down."

For some years, during the early part of this period, there was still a general weekly walk, often on Tuesday morning. And these walks, so far from being regarded as an infliction, were, to the majority of boys, a source of keen delight.

"The long walks," writes a scholar who left Sidcot nearly thirty years ago, "still stand out vividly in my recollection. I regard them as one of the best and happiest influences in my life. In those walks I gathered—thanks to a master who, in our young eyes, was a very cyclopædia of bird-lore and of the knowledge of plants and shells and insects and fossils—an acquaintance with Nature which has been a solace to me ever since. 'How do you know that?' is a question often put to me, in the course of a country ramble. 'Why, I learnt that at Sidcot,' I always feel proud to answer."

It seems almost incredible to anyone who knows and loves the green Heart of Mendip that there ever could have been scholars or teachers who regarded it with anything but affection. But there certainly was a time during this period when such a feeling prevailed. It is now some

years since a man who had been a master in the School long before, happening to meet some of the Sidcot Staff, talked in warm terms of the beauty and interest of the surrounding neighbourhood. When he had finished his eulogy, a prominent master said quietly, "We don't share your enthusiasm!"

The half-yearly Excursions, in June in carts, and in September on foot, were great events in the School life, as they had been during previous periods. Very rarely carriages were provided for what was known as the Riding Nursion, a famous vehicle being a capacious four-horse brake from Banwell. But the regulation means of transport—to Brockley or Ebbor or Berrow or Woodspring—was by means of rough spring-carts, of which it took as many as ten to accommodate the scholars and the Staff. Favourite expeditions were to Brockley Combe and to Ebbor Rocks, both of which were happy hunting-grounds for the naturalists. Other Excursions were to Berrow or Brean, Woodspring or Clevedon. On one memorable occasion the whole School went by train to Teignmouth, whose beautiful clear green sea seemed strange indeed to those who had only known the muddy waters of the Bristol Channel. More than once the boys' first class went a special Excursion of their own to Brean Down, walking by way of Maxmills and Hutton Combe to Uphill, whence they crossed by the Ferry; returning with their loads of specimens, in a capacious spring-cart.

"The Literary Society did much," writes an old Sidcot scholar who has been settled for many years in the Antipodes, "to foster a taste for more than mere rambling. More of us, I venture to think, were followers of 'Eyes,' in the old story, than of 'No Eyes.' "Never in after life has such glory enveloped me as when, one day, after many barren afternoons, I brought back to the School, and displayed before envious fellow butterfly-hunters, a pair of magnificent Clouded Yellows. I used to pray for



Clouded Yellows. Not in nocturnal and even sleepy conventional bed-side petitions, but in broad daylight, net in hand, and in full pursuit of my much-desired game. Also, I prayed for more capacity in Mental Arithmetic. Both petitions, I may add, were amply answered, quickly, and as I wished. Mental Arithmetic was, in those days, taken fasting. Twenty minutes of hated mental calculation, after turning out of bed unnecessarily early, after an unnecessarily cold wash, on a raw winter morning, before the fires had made any sensible impression on the bleak atmosphere of the school-room! And I had a head that never worked properly until it was thoroughly warmed. No wonder I prayed. That was more than thirty years ago. Everything about the School has changed, except the tie that binds together scholars and teachers, old and young alike; the love of what the Sidcot Song of happy memory calls so well 'The dear old School.'"

"I shall never forget," says another scholar of the same period, "my election as a Member of the Boys' Literary Society, a highly honoured and respected body, to belong to which was a very real distinction. I was eventually made a Curator of the great aquarium, a post I thoroughly enjoyed, for it involved most delightful expeditions to Axbridge Moors, resulting in the capture, with other things, of eels, some of which went into the aquarium, and some into the workshop glue-pot, to be consumed afterwards with bread and butter."

The Boys' Literary Society maintained for some years a high level of life and vigour. As under the former administration, the business of its meetings, which were held monthly, consisted mainly of the reading of Reports of observations by the Curators of the various branches of Natural History, of Answers to Questions, such as have been described in the previous chapter, and of Essays—Natural History forming by far the most prominent feature. In the eighties and nineties, however, interest in its work declined;

the number of members diminished; and gaps, sometimes of many months, occurred between the meetings. The proceedings lost their old dignity, and such work as was accomplished was in great degree careless and trivial. Towards the end of the period there came a revival of interest, and the Society recovered much of its former character. The most interesting event in connection with the Association was the celebration, in 1873, of the 50th Anniversary of its Foundation in 1823, by a gathering of Old Scholars and others, which was made the occasion for the calling up, by some who had known the School long before—in a few cases as far back as the early twenties—of many reminiscences of bygone days, some of which have been made use of in the pages of this History. It is interesting to note that, whereas the Literary Society was originally founded on the 5th of November, with the view of diverting the minds of Sidcot scholars of the time from the ceremonies usually associated with Guy Fawkes Day, the authorities of this period arranged for bonfires and fireworks; while torch-light processions, in which many of the boys and girls took part, formed, on several occasions, a most picturesque feature of the Old Scholars' Easter Gathering. In the summer of 1887 the whole School watched, from the top of Crook's Peak—from the very spot where, three hundred years before, as we learn from the Banwell Churchwardens' Accounts, fagots had been stacked, for a beacon to announce the coming of the Spanish Armada—the lights of the many bonfires which commemorated the fiftieth Anniversary of the Accession of Queen Victoria.

There were, it is whispered, other fireworks. "I was one of a small syndicate," writes an old scholar, "who, by the exercise of great economy, had managed to lay in a stock of squibs and crackers and things; and we had planned a mild display on the immortal Fifth of November. I say 'mild,' because, in the nature of things, it was impossible to let them off after dark. So one day, in the hour after dinner, we conspirators assembled with our fireworks, in the field at the

head of the Valley. It is called the Combe now, I understand, but to us, of thirty odd years ago, it was the Valley. We had divided the squibs and crackers, and were ready to begin. Nobody cared if it was broad daylight. We should at least have noise and smoke for our money.

"Suddenly, before so much as a match had been struck, the alarm was given that old 'Q.' was quietly looking on, from the top of Sidcot Hill. Hastily cramming the evidence of our criminal intentions into our pockets, we strolled leisurely homewards, assuming the best air of innocence we could. I, for one, lost no time in stuffing my things down the shed sink, so that I should have nothing to produce when we were hauled up for sentence after Reading.

"And we never were hauled up; never heard a word about the affair. Long afterwards—years afterwards, when I asked 'Q.' how he had discovered our little Gunpowder Plot, he assured me that my confession was the first he had heard of it. He had never seen us; hadn't even been near the place. We might have had our display after all!"

The games of this period were, like other features of the time, more systematic and better organised than before; and were played, for the most part, under more favourable conditions. They were, moreover, made compulsory on certain days; much to the benefit, no doubt, of cricket and football and cross-country runs, but to the detriment of the various Natural History pursuits, for which the neighbourhood offers such great advantages. Instead of the solitary half-yearly contest of early days—"The Match," as it was called for many years—many cricket-matches were arranged, chiefly with other schools; and Sidcot elevens gained many brilliant victories. The rules of Association Football superseded the old Sidcot regulations. Teams of eleven disciplined players were substituted for the disorderly if happy mob of five and twenty or so on each side, and the most popular of all games was reduced to a science. Some who can recall the old, free, unorganised method may, perhaps, be inclined to

doubt whether, after all, the loss has not been greater than the gain.

Before this time football had been almost entirely confined to the playground, which was now all covered with asphalt. Even in the early seventies games upon the grass were rare. In 1878, when Harborough was taken into use as a cricket-field—a limited area being levelled for the pitch—football was played in the same field. It was not until 1886 that a field for football alone was available; and even then it was a long way off, in the valley between the School and the Roman Road. It was in Harborough that the Old Scholars' Association, in 1885, built a pavilion for use during cricket-matches. For this pavilion one of the School Committee provided a flag, a red ensign. It is said that one of his colleagues, on hearing of this, held up his hands in horror, and exclaimed, "Against that I do protest!" Harborough, poorly adapted for its purpose as it was, remained the Sidcot cricket-field for twenty years. But the purchase, in 1898, of the Longfield Estate provided a magnificent recreation ground, nine acres in extent, accommodating both boys and girls. The Old Scholars' Association defrayed the cost of levelling and otherwise preparing the ground, and of erecting a second and larger pavilion.

Another improvement connected with the games of this period was the introduction of School Colours. Before this time every player had worn the jersey or the cap that pleased his fancy best, and the result was more picturesque than uniform. Frequently players had no appropriate costume at all, but wore, in the cricket or football field, the same attire as in school or on the playground.

The first games of lawn-tennis at Sidcot were played—by the Staff only—on the little patch of grass under the old oak in the Long Garden—an even scantier patch than that of the present day. In 1882 the first tennis-courts were provided for the girls, the cost being mainly covered by subscription. These were of asphalt. The grass courts were laid down



in the following year. A marked feature of this period was the improvement in the girls' games, which, before this time, had been tame and uninteresting, being chiefly confined to a few running games, and to the use of a jumping-board in the shed, and of a giant's stride, on the playground; although cricket had been introduced, not without considerable opposition from the girls themselves, in the last year of Josiah Evans's Head-mastership. Hockey now became popular on that side of the house, and the girls' eleven greatly distinguished themselves in matches with other schools.

Early in Edmund Ashby's reign, the privilege of taking after-dinner walks unaccompanied by a teacher, initiated by Josiah Evans, and originally confined to the boys' first class, was extended to the whole School; and all those whose conduct and disciplinary record were satisfactory were allowed to wander daily over the country. The arrangement did not altogether commend itself to the farmers of the district, who complained, with more or less of reason, of gates left open, of mowing-grass trampled down, of hedges broken through, of notice-boards pulled down, and of apples unlawfully appropriated. There can be no doubt that boys, especially when they are new to country life, are apt to forget their duties towards those through whose fields they are allowed to wander.

It has been whispered that there was a time, in this period, when a few bold and turbulent spirits, whose conduct and character kept their names off the "walk-lists," set the authorities at defiance by roaming the country, not merely at prohibited hours, but in the middle of the night. There even existed in the School a Secret Society, which held nocturnal meetings and kept its cipher minute-book in a rocky hollow in the side of Callow, and who were in the habit of wandering over the hills between midnight and daybreak, venturing as far as Cheddar and Black Down, and even down Goatchurch Cave.

"There were only a few of us," writes an old member of



the 'Midnight Touring Society,' never more than ten, and sometimes not even half that number; and we were more select and exclusive than the Senior Literary Society itself. So well were our secrets kept that no outsider knew anything of our movements, nor were our proceedings ever detected by the authorities, to whom our badge of membership, the letters M.T.S., which some of the fellows were actually daring enough to put on rubber stamps, after their names, were a mystery to the last.

"I have heard that Sidcot is not the only Friends' school in which such things have happened. And although we thought nothing of making jam over the workshop gas, in the small hours of an autumn morning, we never got the length of holding midnight feasts within the sacred precincts of the teachers' study.

"The time for starting on an expedition—which was generally on a Saturday night—was when the last of the masters to go to bed began to snore. As soon as the anxiously awaited signal was heard, the members of the Midnight Touring Society made their way through a window or down the stairs, and stole quietly out of bounds. Many times we went and came without mishap. Usually all went well. But I remember how an expedition to the top of Black Down was interrupted by the barking of a dog at Tying Farm, and the shouts of a man from one of the upper windows, which drove us all under a hedge, and kept us there for half an hour or more. Then, hearing no further sounds, we made straight for home.

"The last of these unholy raids was one summer night, just before the end of the half,—now many years ago. Three of us had planned the descent of an old mine-shaft on Sandford Hill, and had hidden our apparatus on the spot. It had been a glorious day, and very hot, which added to our anticipations of a ramble at the cool and silent dead of night. The Meeting-house clock struck twelve as we left the School; and by one o'clock we had driven our crowbar into the turf at

the mouth of the pit. We were in the act of fastening the rope to it, when heavy drops of rain began to fall, and we were aware of mutterings of distant thunder. It was clear that we should have to give up the attempt for that night. Wet clothes in summer would be difficult to account for: there were no fires that we could get at.

"Rope and crowbar were promptly hidden among the bushes, and we went off at a run down the slope and away across the fields towards the School. But just as we had reached the stile of the old football-ground the storm broke. Down came the rain in torrents. Every few moments the sky was lit up by the most brilliant lightning, each flash followed closely by a deafening peal of thunder. Crouched trembling under the tree we discussed in low tones the situation. We regarded the storm as a judgment on us for our evil courses. We felt that we were doomed. I remember picturing the announcement of the news that three Sidcot boys had been found dead under a tree.

"At last the sun began to rise. The storm subsided. The thunder went rumbling away along the hills. We were saved. But before we left the tree we made solemn vows of better life and of more exemplary conduct. Never again would we break bounds at night. And then, cold and wet and miserable as we were, yet devoutly thankful for deliverance from peril, we sang 'Lead Kindly Light.' I remember vividly how the words, 'The night is dark, and I am far from home,' appealed to our young hearts. We got back wet and muddy, but safe and undiscovered. More than that, we kept our vow. That was at once the last expedition of the Midnight Touring Society, and the last day of its existence."

The first bicycle seen at Sidcot was one of the primitive old "dandy horses," in which there were no cranks or pedals, but which the rider propelled by striking his feet against the ground. On such a machine the shoemaker Ham used to ride in from Axbridge, half a century ago, "at a slow and

laborious pace, arriving with his face the colour of his name, and in a profuse perspiration." The two bicycles which, in the late seventies, were presented to the School by Richard and George Tangye, had wooden wheels, and would now be contemptuously styled "bone-shakers," but they were very fine machines of their kind and for their day. One, which was given to the boys' teachers, came to hopeless and irreparable grief under a hay-wagon. The other, ridden by the boys, chiefly on the playground, had not, as might have been anticipated, a greatly longer existence. The invention of more serviceable machines made cycling very popular at Sidcot during this period; and it was not long before it was found necessary to provide, in the old laboratory in the Long Garden, a special room for the storage of bicycles.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to comment, in more than general terms, upon the discipline and tone of the School during so long a period as twenty-nine years. It is, however, the opinion of the writer that it would be hard to find, in any school, a higher tone and better order, combined with greater enthusiasm for work, than prevailed in the boys' first class in the days immediately preceding the introduction of Departmental Teaching. That method, with all its advantages, has still the serious drawback that each class has several masters; and that there cannot, under such conditions, be the same close and personal relationship between the scholars and their various instructors as when the class is in the hands of one teacher.

Even in the seventies, however, things were not always what they should have been, or even perhaps what they seemed. Nor were occasions of trouble wanting, due largely to the mistakes of well-meaning but untrained and not very efficient lieutenants, some of whom made but brief stay in the School.

In the eighties, to judge from the Reminiscences of some of those who were at school at the time, conditions changed

somewhat. "There can be little doubt," writes a scholar of the period, "that the Sidcot boys of my time were an unruly and disrespectful set; and I can recall many an episode that, as I look back upon it now, seems more picturesque than creditable, and that certainly merited much severer treatment than it received. I shall never forget the experiences of one particular November day, now rather more than twenty years ago. I heard from home that my father was coming, and that he expected to reach Winscombe at half-past seven that evening; and, naturally, I was a good deal excited at the thought,—a fact which may partly explain what followed. In the afternoon, for some breach of the peace, I forget what, I got an hour's work, and was told that I should not be allowed to go down to the station, because the imposition would not then have been finished. Evening school brought more trouble. During the absence of the master-in-charge, I became involved in a desperate scrimmage with another boy; and the teacher, returning, found us struggling on the floor. I was ordered to bed; and, further, was told that even if my father did come up to see me there, I was on no account to get up before the morning. Two teachers, I remember, found it hard work to get me upstairs to the New Room; but, once there, they left me, as they fondly thought, safely stowed.

"They were not sure of me, however, and, every ten minutes, a master came up to see that I was still there. But from my window I could see the Meeting-house clock; and I determined that, after the next inspection, at 7.20 or so, I would make a bolt for the station. It is true that I was in bed, and that I had my night-shirt on. But the things that dangled from the pegs were my Sunday clothes. Under my night-shirt I still wore all my work-a-day attire, with the exception of my socks and boots.

"It was 7.22 when the patrol came round again. I answered to my name, and he disappeared. The moment that his back was turned, I slipped out of bed, discarded the night-shirt,



crammed my socks into my pocket, and, tying the laces of my boots together, stole quickly downstairs, after my gaoler. As I passed the over-coat room I grabbed my coat, but failed to find a cap; and so, bare-headed and bare-footed, I rushed down the long, dimly-lighted passage, out into a storm of wind and rain, across the road, and through the fields to the station. To S——, best of station-masters, who was in his tiny little box, working the signals, I explained my errand. He advised me to hide under a goods-truck, where, concealed by a tarpaulin, I put on my boots.

"Then came some anxious moments. Through a chink in my screen, I could survey the platform; and I wondered how long it would be before my escape was discovered; how long before a master followed in pursuit. Then, just as the faint sound of a whistle came up the slope from Sandford, there was my janitor, vainly endeavouring to button-hole S——, who, good man, had really no time to answer questions.

"It isn't far from Sandford to Winscombe, but I doubt if any other train ever took quite so long to cover the distance. But it was covered at last. Out stepped my father. Through the pouring rain I dashed along the platform, like any street Arab, and claimed him, at the very moment that my pursuer came forward to claim me."

"No one who took part in it," writes a scholar of the eighties, "will forget the siege of the third class room; the sort of thing that, in theory at any rate, has always been dear to the heart of the law-defying schoolboy.

"It was late on in the autumn. The weather, for a long period, had been bad. Many holiday afternoons, that half, had been spent indoors; and there is no great cause for wonder that there was a heavy crop of punishments, when we had no reasonable outlet for our energies. We had nothing to do, nowhere to go, no spirit to start anything, no one to give us a friendly lead. Some boys, it is true, worked a little with tools. A few, a very few, stuffed birds



or wrote essays. But a very great many occupied much of their so-called spare time in working-off arrears of punishment.

"One such afternoon, when prisoner's-base had been tried, and had been given up as too hopelessly uninteresting under such depressing conditions,—the rain was pattering on the playground, and dripping into the shed,—and we were wandering aimlessly about, some bold and original spirit suggested a Barring-out. Let the third class barricade their room, and let the rest of the School try to turn them out.

"The idea caught on like wildfire; the third class hailing with delight the prospect of defending their sanctum, the others feeling equally elated at the chance of showing the would-be defenders what a poor lot they were. The third class withdrew to their room, and were given ten minutes by the Meeting-house clock in which to construct their barricade, a sentry being posted at the window, and calling out, minute by minute, to warn us how time was flying.

"The most important feature of the defence was the master's desk, a huge, square structure, part of which was used as a cupboard for storing copies and drawing-paper; and I rather think that, if the besiegers had remembered its weight and solidity they would not so readily have taken up our challenge. Ponderous as the desk was, it was lugged into place at last, right up against the door; and then a frantic yell from within the barricaded room announced to all outsiders they were ready for their worst.

"The siege began. As many of the fellows as could get near the door pushed and struggled and yelled, while the remainder, in a seething mass behind, yelled in chorus on the stairs. But yells and struggles were equally vain. The afternoon wore on. Five o'clock drew near. The great desk had not budged an inch. More than that, the door still stood, bearing testimony to the skill of its framers; although

there were times, in the hottest moments of the siege, when we fully expected to see it break in half.

“Close upon tea-time, and at a moment when the yells of defiance from the unbeaten garrison were at their loudest, we distinctly heard above the din the strident tones of a master’s voice, calling on us to surrender. We, however, pretending to think it a ruse of the besiegers, and that some boy was trying to personate one of the teachers, jeered; and suggested that they should try some other dodge. We held the fort to the end; and when, at length, the bell rang for tea, we marched out with all the honours of war, a flushed, triumphant, happy crew.

“That was not really the end, however. After tea we were ordered to our desks, in the very room we had so successfully defended. The storm broke. The master spoke his mind. But in our excited mood his scathing speech made no impression. The more he piled up the punishment, the more jovial we became. After an hour’s preach came the sentence: We were gated for a week; we were to do lessons on each of the two half-holiday afternoons; in every playtime except recess we were to write a copy; and on no day, not even Sunday, were we to enter the room we had desecrated, except for school and for the writing of the copies. Finally, two boys who had kept out of the row, for fear of the aftermath, were held up to us as models of what boys ought to be. We were quite content. The punishment was nothing to the fun which they, poor timid souls, had missed, and which we had so thoroughly enjoyed.

“Next day was Sunday. There were no copies to write. But the whole class suddenly developed a virtuous desire to write to their people at home. The previous day’s edict prevented our going to our desks, and there was nothing for it but to do our writing in the shed. We had not been long at work when Miss Davis entered, to find a long line of boys, in overcoats, caps and mufflers, for it was a bitter cold

morning, sitting on their tuck-hampers, with play-boxes for desks, all down the middle of the shed, all silent and all writing hard.

“‘Charlie!’ exclaimed Miss Davis in a horrified whisper to the nearest boy, ‘hast thou been naughty?’

“‘Oh, dear no!’ was the cheerful answer. ‘We’re only writing letters. We’re sitting here to please Mr Blank.’

“Next moment a procession of Committee Friends, headed by Mr Ashby, came round the corner, and we were promptly packed off to our room;—in our eyes the finishing touch to a great and glorious time. We had to pay, of course; chiefly in Euclid, if I remember right. But the game had been well worth the candle. Why, a whole book of that detested oppressor of youth would have been a trifle in comparison with the wild delights of that never-to-be-forgotten Saturday afternoon.”

The Old Scholars’ Association, which, as briefly described in the previous chapter, was founded in 1871, rendered most valuable assistance to the School during this period, offering prizes for Drawing and Painting, for Carving and Joinery, and for Natural History Collections, subsidising the games, equipping the gymnasium, building cricket-pavilions, and in other ways showing their practical interest. Membership was at first confined to those who had left from the boys’ side since 1857; but these limitations, both of time and sex, were removed at the first meeting, which was held during Edmund Ashby’s administration; and in 1891 it was further agreed that those who had been teachers in the School might become members of the Association.

The meetings were at first held at Rose Cottage (on one occasion in the School itself), but in 1874, and for the eleven years following, members met at Farmer Lewis’s, at Sidcot, where, if space was somewhat limited, there were most harmonious and convivial gatherings. The meetings of the Association were then transferred to the old Woodborough Hall, and are now held at Bird’s.

Since 1895, the Old Scholars' official gatherings have been held at Easter, instead of at the time of the General Meeting, and have continued to grow in importance and interest; that of Easter 1907 is considered to have been the most successful in the history of the Association.

Keenly-contested games of cricket and football, between past and present scholars, are now regular features of the School year, and are very different in character from the first Old Scholars' Cricket Match, of June 1878. Only eight "old boys" could be persuaded to play on that occasion, and several of these had not handled a bat since they had left school. The School team had been carefully coached by their captain to make things as easy as possible for the eight veterans; and there was a shout of laughter from the field when "point," who had held the very simplest of catches, suddenly remembering his instructions, dropped the ball as if it had been red-hot! "The eight were beaten in the first innings," to quote the Old Scholars' Report, "but covered themselves with glory, and might even have won in the end, had time allowed of a second attempt."

In 1891, Robert L. Impey, who had been Secretary to the Association from its foundation in 1871, and who had taken the warmest personal interest in its affairs, retired from office, to the great regret of his fellow-members, some of whom presented him with one of Edward T. Compton's beautiful Alpine landscapes, in token of their gratitude and esteem. It was a well-deserved acknowledgment. Members who have joined since then can have no idea at all of how much the Association has owed in the past to Robert Impey's untiring efforts on its behalf; and still more to his genial, firm, and wise guidance. There have been times in the history of the Association when not only geniality but firmness was required on the part of its officers. In the old days, an Old Scholars' Gathering without Robert Impey seemed to feel itself under a cloud, and the proceedings were as dull as the play without Hamlet. Sylvanus A.



Reynolds, who had for some years ably assisted Robert L. Impey, succeeded him as Secretary, and did much valuable work for the Association. He was followed by his brothers, E. S. Reynolds and A. P. Reynolds, each of whom proved a most efficient and hard-working servant of the Society, which owes much to the self-denying and arduous labours of the three members of the family. The affairs of the Association are now managed partly by the Secretary, with the aid of a Standing Committee, and there are also local secretaries in various parts of the country.

S. A. Reynolds also founded, in 1892, and conducted for rather more than two years, an illustrated magazine called *The Sidcot Quarterly*, whose object was "to keep Old Scholars, living in more or less remote districts, in touch with matters of current interest; and at the same time to provide for the inmates of the School . . . a record of the most striking incidents of each successive half-year." The magazine came to an end in 1892, and was followed, some years later, by another quarterly, called, in allusion to the School colours, *Blue and Gold*, but its life was even shorter still.

Among the most important improvements of this period were the establishment, in 1882, of an apparatus for the disinfection of the clothes and bedding of those who had suffered from infectious diseases, and the erection in the Long Garden, in 1887, at a cost of about £1000, of the first Sanatorium or Isolation Hospital. Before these two potent checks to the spread of infection were employed there had been many cases of scarlatina and measles, although they were almost invariably of a mild type. In 1878, for example, there were fifty cases of scarlatina; and in 1886 measles interrupted the work of the School for three months. But disinfection and isolation changed all this. After 1887, although cases of these complaints did occur, they were few in number, rarely exceeding two or three in any year.

There were, however, more serious troubles, against



which care and skill were powerless. No fewer than nine deaths occurred in the School during the twenty-nine years ; and it is remarkable that these deaths were in every department of the Institution ; in the family of the Head-master, among the teachers on both sides of the house, among the boys, the girls and the servants.

In 1889 Dr Wade, who, for sixty years, had prescribed for the maladies of Sidcot scholars, was informed by the Committee that his services were no longer required. He had been one of the prominent personages in the history of the School. Few who came in contact with him will readily forget his burly figure, his rubicund face, and his quiet, self-possessed, sustaining manner. Many of his patients will remember, too, his Abernethy-like curttness of speech, and his occasional roughness. He was an able practitioner, although, towards the close of his long career, he failed somewhat, as was but natural. No one was more conscious of it than himself. "My hand," he once said to the writer, in connection with a delicate operation which he preferred to pass on to a hospital surgeon ; "my hand is as steady as ever. It's my sight that isn't what it used to be."

Two other familiar figures retired from the service of the School during this period. In 1884 Mrs Seaman, the boys' matron, gave up, for family reasons, the post she had held for seventeen years. And in 1900, Amelia Ann Davis, long her colleague, left the Institution, after having ably and conscientiously acted as girls' matron for no fewer than thirty-three years.

The School dietary was very greatly improved under Edmund Ashby's administration, especially as regarded breakfast and tea. At the former meal, porridge was first supplied, for those who liked it, in 1879. Two years later, a Sub-Committee appointed to consider the question of diet recommended that porridge should be provided three times a week, bread and milk once, and cocoa and bread-and-butter



*Saml. D. Wade*



three times; bread-and-milk to be the alternative for porridge. Tea was to be provided every evening, and as much new milk as was asked for, and there were to be biscuits for lunch and supper. In 1884 fresh fish first regularly appeared at dinner. There had been fish before—sixty years before—but chiefly in the form of salted herrings or mackerel. In 1894 breakfast was further improved by the addition of eggs or bacon twice a week, and by a more liberal supply of jam or marmalade as a substitute for butter.

An improvement that materially affected the comfort and health of the scholars was the erection, in 1876, on the south side of the farm-yard, of new gas-works, whose efficiency was subsequently increased by a fresh arrangement of the retorts, and by the substitution, in 1893, of a telescopic gas-holder; its predecessor, after a much shorter life than the original holder of 1842, which stood on the other side of the yard, having been condemned as hopelessly patched, frequently leaking, and a constant source of expense. Incandescent burners were introduced in 1899, and a gas cooking-range was erected in 1902.

Two changes with regard to the holidays were made during Edmund Ashby's administration. So lately as the winter of 1873 the Christmas vacation was optional: parents might have their children home or not, as they pleased. A few of the scholars had frequently remained, but had almost always been invited to Friends' houses for all or part of the time. But in 1874 it was ruled that all the children should in future go home at Christmas. The other alteration was at Easter. The General Meeting of 1897, while not seeing its way to the establishment of a regular spring holiday, agreed that children should be allowed leave of absence at the following Easter, from Thursday evening until the following Tuesday morning; thus preparing the way for an Easter vacation and the division of the school-year into terms;—points which had been discussed many times before. In 1901, in compliance with a suggestion of the General Meeting, an attempt was made to ascertain

the views of parents on this subject. And although only sixty-two replies were received to the hundred and forty letters which had been sent out by the Head-master, the preponderance of feeling appeared to be in favour of terms instead of "halves"; and the General Meeting of 1902 decided that the change should be made in the following year.

The first of the long series of structural improvements which began in 1874, and which has so transformed the building that no scholar of forty years ago would now be able to recognise his old surroundings, was the provision of better accommodation on the girls' side. The original design, as suggested by Richard Tangye, was merely to build a room for the girls' first class. But when it was found necessary to remove the roof of the play-room, the Committee resolved to take the opportunity of building a bedroom over the play-room. They also decided to move the girls' shed from the top to the western side of the playground. These improvements, together with some minor but much-needed alterations, cost £1200, of which £1000 was the gift of Richard and George Tangye. The work was finished in December 1874; and the occasion was celebrated by Arthur H. Eddington, the boys' second class teacher, in a song which began:

"Forty years ago, 'tis said,  
Was a sure foundation laid,  
Of the good old School which here so proudly stands.  
Many hundred girls and boys  
Since have shared its griefs and joys,  
Who are scattered now in many distant lands,"

and which, for two years, continued to be the recognised Sidcot Song. The words of the present School Song were written in 1876, as the result of the appointment, by the Boys' Literary Society, of a Committee of three members, only one of whom, however, had anything to do with the composition. The words were originally intended to be sung to the air of "The Oak and the Ivy"; but this was soon superseded by



a modification of the "Marseillaise," as introduced into Schumann's "Two Grenadiers."

The next great building alteration was on the boys' side of the house. In 1877 Richard and George Tangye offered another £1000, to which George Palmer, then M.P. for Reading, added £300 towards providing better accommodation for both boys and masters. These improvements, which were completed in 1878, included three new class-rooms—now the fifth form room, the boys' reading-room, and the boys' fourth form room—a new laboratory—now the Natural History room—a new dormitory, a new common room for the masters, contrived out of part of the old "Class-room," and a larger dining-room, formed by throwing together the old school-room, the passage and the boys' teachers' study. The original dining-room was at the same time converted into a school-room. In 1879 the Committee accomplished another much-needed reform by building a laundry in place of the scanty and make-shift appliances with which the School washerwomen had struggled for more than forty years. In 1881 the boys' shed, which then stood on the east side of the playground, where the boys' third form rooms now are, was inclosed, and was included in the system of hot-water pipes which had been provided for the new class-rooms three years before.

The improvement of 1884 was one which affected both sides of the house. In that year the old and altogether inadequate swimming-bath was lengthened and deepened, roofed in and supplied with means for heating the water when required. The roof, by keeping off the direct sunshine, checked that growth of *conserve* which used to make the bottom of the old bath so slippery that it was hardly possible to stand on it; while the warming of the water very greatly extended the bathing-season, and thus gave much more opportunity for learning to swim. More than half the cost of the alterations to the bath, amounting altogether to £220, was defrayed by old scholars and relatives of the children.

A few points about the School water-supply may here be noticed. In 1878 about £100 was spent in developing the springs in the Combe; and at the same time the Committee acquired the right to lay an additional feed-pipe from the well in the adjoining orchard, the well from which inhabitants of the "Haunted House" had in old days drawn their drinking-water. Under the original arrangement the right to lay and maintain a line of pipes between the springs and the School was only temporary, and might be withdrawn at any time by a year's notice from the owner of the land, a state of things which more than once had caused trouble. In 1882, however, a new agreement was drawn up by which the right-of-way for the pipes was made perpetual. In 1900 the swimming-bath was connected with the new parish water-main, thus providing an important additional supply.

In 1890 two very important additions were made, each of which has had a marked influence on the School. The first was the gymnasium, which was built by the Committee, but equipped by the Old Scholars' Association. The other improvement of the year was the erection of a new laboratory—the third since the School was rebuilt—and a lecture-theatre in connection with it. The new laboratory was a very different place, not only from the bare and dusty and unfurnished out-house adjoining Rose Cottage, but from the greatly-improved room of forty years later. The second laboratory, as already noted, was converted into a Natural History room, where the boys might press plants, set butterflies, boil shells, skin birds, or keep live caterpillars. Ten years after this time, the ancient laboratory in the Long Garden, which had for many years served as a bicycle-house, recovered some of its lost dignity in being fitted up as a dark-room for photography, which had now become a very popular pursuit in the School.

There had been a dark-room before—forty years before, in fact. Old scholars who can recall the building alterations

of 1861 will remember a dark and dungeon-like recess, for it was little more, off the passage connecting the boys' room with the workshop, a passage used, as a rule, only in wet weather. It was lighted from above by clear glass, below which was fastened some yellow calico, by way of screening off the light; and its sole equipment was an old stone-ware filter. The likeness of this little chamber to a dungeon was strengthened by the fact that boys were sometimes locked-in there by their companions. It is even whispered that it was actually used at times by masters who had classes in the adjoining boys'-room, as a convenient "black-hole" for the solitary confinement of refractory scholars. The old dark-room was, indeed, used for various purposes. "I had possession of it for two whole months," writes a scholar of the seventies, "and kept a kestrel in it, which we used to fly at mice in the boys'-room. On rare occasions we varied the hawk's diet with feather instead of fur. We used to borrow Farmer L.'s old muzzle-loader, which we used to fire into the brown of the flocks of house-sparrows that haunted his stack-yard, paying a penny a shot, he always loading the gun. Nor did the kestrel reap the whole benefit. Much of our game was roasted in front of the boys'-room fire, and uncommonly good it was too. There's more on a pheasant, certainly. But no pheasant that was ever reared could surpass in flavour those toothsome, if scorched and smutty little sparrows of those far off days. And did you ever hear the fate of the old filter? We floated a small ginger-beer company—we three, I needn't mention names; and having sunk our slender capital in yeast and sugar and ginger, we proceeded to brew our precious compound in the filter. Alas! the filter blew up, and the company with it. Even the poor old kestrel was the worse for the catastrophe, and came very near being suffocated by the fumes."

In 1893 and 1895 were carried out some of the most important improvements of all, the former on the boys' and the latter on the girls' side of the house. The additions in

1893, which involved an outlay of £3500, included a new class-room on the site of the old playing-shed, new dormitories sufficient for twenty-seven boys and two masters, a more than doubling of the dining-room by throwing together the two long narrow apartments which had been the dining-room and school-room of other days, a new swimming-bath, the third—a foot longer, three feet wider, and nine inches deeper than its predecessor, and provided with dressing-rooms—a new playing-shed, and the addition to the playground of most of what was left of the Home Field.

The old shed, which was then demolished, stood on the ground now occupied by the boys' third form room, and its door faced the entrance of the Meeting-house. Its western side, where the roof was supported by a row of light iron pillars, was open to the weather; and the wind and the rain that came from the west had free access to it. So had the swallows, who built their nests among the timbers of its open roof. The shed was rather a comfortless place, in wet or cold or windy weather; but here, in bygone days, the boys were in the habit of beguiling such play-time as could not be spent in the open, with French Prison Bar, Hopping Sodgers, French and English—a tug-of-war with the long-rope, to say nothing of Tip-and-Run, or of the long-forgotten game of High-Cockalorum.

In 1901 the boys' reading-room was converted into an art-room or studio, which is now liberally supplied with models. And in the same year three private studies for masters were built over the changing-rooms connected with the gymnasium—a much more convenient, suitable and economical arrangement than that of hiring rooms for the use of the teachers in neighbouring cottages, as had been done for some years past.

The shed was paved with stone—large, irregular flags of Dolomitic Conglomerate; and down the centre and the eastern side of it ran two deeply-cut lines, along the latter of





THE OLD PLAYING-SHED





which the boys were drawn up for "collect," before marching into the school-room or dining-room. It was considered rather a feat to stand at the eastern or innermost line, and, with a hop, step and jump, to land on the playground, well clear of the shed flags. Between this line and the shed-wall was a long wooden shelf on which stood the boys' play-boxes, in which were kept, with other things, such provisions as had not been given up to the authorities for distribution at "supper-time," at the sound of the surgery-bell—ten minutes before the meal. In their play-boxes, also, some boys kept pets, such as wood-mice, snakes or slow-worms, although the keeping of such captives was altogether against the law.

In Josiah Evans's time, not many years after the shed had been built, thefts of things from the play-boxes, especially of apples and cake, caused a good deal of stir and no small alarm among the boys, especially as all attempts to discover the marauder failed. At length a watch was set, and it was found that the thief was the School horse, which had been turned out to graze in the adjoining Home Field. The clever beast was in the habit, in the middle of the night, of opening the door of the drying-yard—a small enclosure whose site is now occupied by music-rooms—of walking across the playground to the shed, of lifting with its nose the lids of the boxes, and of appropriating cake or apples or anything else that took its fancy.

It was in the shed that the boys assembled,—collected, they would have called it,—with their butterfly-nets and egg-boxes and plant-tins and geologists' hammers, before those long and delightful Tuesday morning walks which live in the memory of every scholar of the time. Here, too, they fell-in after Meeting; and here, on Wednesdays, towels were given out before bathing. In those dark ages the boys, fifty or more of them, all bathed together; and it was a point of vital consequence to have even a quarter of a minute of open water before the narrow limits of the old bath were choked

with a splashing, shouting mass. With this end in view, every boy, as he waited for his towel, loosened every button that he decently could, pocketed his collar and neck-tie, and unlaced his boots, so that, when once inside the bath enclosure, complete undressing was a matter of seconds, at most.

Woe betide any unfortunate whose relative had, by delivering a long sermon, kept the Meeting later than usual, and had thus curtailed the bathing-time. Once, in the early sixties, a Friend travelling in the Ministry, had held forth at such length in the Wednesday morning Meeting that his impatient congregation were deprived of their bathe altogether. The too-fluent orator had a nephew in the School, a clever, although somewhat insignificant individual—now a tall and broad-shouldered Canadian settler—and on his unfortunate head the vials of the wrath of those who had been disappointed of their bathe descended. It is five and forty years since, but the writer of these pages can see, as if it were yesterday, one of the big boys, when the after-Meeting collect was over, rush with clenched fists upon the innocent scape-goat, saying, “You young rascal, I WILL give it you!”

“The swimming-bath of my time,” says an old scholar of the seventies, “was a poor affair. But what a delight it was to us, in spite of all its defects! The colour of the water never troubled us then, or the slipperiness of the slimy bottom. Far more important in our eyes was the coveted half-crown that was bestowed on every boy who swam the length; and that, to many a happy youngster who had struggled bravely through the whole forty feet, was as the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Many of us gained that much desired and most sensible reward. Who paid it, I wonder? I remember one fellow who could only swim backwards; and another who never tried, because he had been, so he declared, forbidden to bathe until he had learnt to swim! There certainly was some surreptitious bathing, both in the bath and in Fuller’s Pond, but I don’t think there

was much of it. It was in Fuller's that one of the fellows got stuck in the weed; and his companions had great difficulty in getting him out.

"There was some surreptitious sliding, too, on the bath. But it was only for the name of the thing. There was always the danger of tripping up, at the end, and coming a cropper on the flags. Nor could such a puny affair compare for a moment with the glorious long slide down the middle of the playground, forty yards long, or even more; down which the fellows, often with one of the masters in front, went again and again and again, in one continuous stream, interrupted at times by a colossal downfall, in which perhaps a dozen fellows came to grief together, one shouting, laughing, struggling heap. And what lark we had, pouring down water, the night before! I remember how one boy, hurrying down the slope from the bath, with a pail of water in his hand, slipped on a patch of ice, and sat abruptly down, not on the asphalt, but in the bucket, which stuck to him like its shell to a snail. Nor could he get out of it, in spite of frantic efforts and forcible ejaculations; the rest of the water-carriers collected in a ring round him, helpless with uncontrollable laughter."

The alterations carried out on the girls' side, in 1895, included two new class-rooms, a common-room for the mistresses, a new play-room and new bedrooms. The girls' playground, too, was enlarged and improved.

In 1897, on the 13th of March, a fire broke out in the laboratory, but was put out before it had done much damage. It is remarkable that this is the only fire that has ever occurred in the School, which, before Edmund Ashby's time, possessed, in the shape of fire-extinguishing apparatus, not so much as a solitary fire-bucket. In 1887 a number of "grenades" were placed in the dormitories, and a fire-escape was provided. In the following year the Committee purchased a fire-engine, placed a stand-pipe in the centre of the house, and gave the boys some instruction in fire-drill.

"I remember as if it were yesterday," writes a scholar of the time—"after the passage over Sidcot of one of those storms of reformation with which the boys of my day were familiar—the establishment of the Fire Brigade. It suddenly occurred to the Committee, so we understood, that the buildings had no means of dealing with fire; and that if a conflagration were to break out in the middle of the night, our prospects of escape were small. The first step was taken in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, when 'fire-grenades' were hung up in many of the rooms, and we received instructions about their use. Some of us, I recollect, were sceptical with regard to their efficiency; and our scepticism was to some extent justified by the entire failure of a surreptitious attempt to extinguish the fourth-class room fire with the contents of one of the bottles.

"What a thrill of excitement ran through the School at the news, about a year after that, that a fire-engine was coming, and that it had actually arrived at Winscombe station! Many of us had seen fire-engines. Some of us had even followed one, as it thundered through the streets, behind its four magnificent horses. We watched in fancy the getting-up of steam, we saw the sparks flying from the funnel, we pictured ourselves as firemen, with brass helmets and axes and life-lines.

"The engine arrived, and was wheeled into the drying-yard; and, by the Head-master's invitation we all rushed off in an excited mob to see it. Never was there a greater disappointment! No boiler, no funnel, no shafts, no brass helmets! Nothing but an insignificant little red and green affair, with two small upright cylinders and one larger one, with two handles, standing on a light four-wheeled truck, like an under-sized porter's barrow. *That* a fire-engine? That could never throw water on the School roof! Nor could it. When we tried it, on the playground, it was discovered that the new machine had not strength enough to pump water higher than the bedroom windows. Whereupon



the hearts of all the timid little boys, who remembered only too well the lurid picture that had been drawn, the year before, of the probable consequences of the breaking-out of fire in the dead of night, sank down into their boots again.

“However, the Fire Brigade was organized; and one day, after dinner, we were mustered for our first practice, which was to take the form of washing the windows of the School front. The engine was got out from its lair under the steps of the music-rooms, and was connected by a hose with the bath. Another length of hose was laid along the passage, past the surgery and the kitchen, and out through the hall. When all was ready, the Head-master, hose in hand, gave the signal to begin pumping, at the same time pointing the delivery pipe at a lamp over the front-door, whose panes were evidently in need of cleansing. A prolonged hiss, a fine jet of water. And lo! the glass windows of the unfortunate lamp, smashed to smithereens by the force of the water, fell in glittering fragments about the head of the Master!

“No attempt was made that day to wash any more windows. By this time, moreover, the hose was leaking all down the line, and, to the dismay of Miss Davis, was flooding the passage with water. So ended our first field-day. We had, if I remember right, three fire-drills in all. The fire-engine fever had quite subsided by the end of a month. The engine was then chained to the balusters of the music-room stairs, where it remained, rusty and uncared for. The delivery-pipe and the hose fared better, being used, together with the red lamp, which never knew oil or wick from the day of its arrival, as drawing-models in the art-room.”

But although the building sustained no damage by fire, it suffered severely from a violent storm, in October 1877; a storm which blew down hundreds of trees in the neighbourhood, among them some of the finest in the parish, including a giant elm in the Combe, a noble old lime near Hale, and

several tall and beautiful elms by the side of the path that leads across the fields to the Well. In addition to damage of this kind, the gale carried away a thousand slates from the School roof,—depositing some of them in the Home Field,—broke windows and sky-lights, and blew down parts of chimney-stacks.

Another storm, on the 11th of November 1891, uprooted the most northerly of the six elms in the Long Garden, known as the “Committee Friends.” About ninety rings were counted in the trunk, a number which probably represents the age of the tree.

The spirit of change and of progress which, keeping step with the march of the time, affected the life of the School in so many of its aspects, was strongly felt in the Sunday Evening Readings, which, before this period, were comparatively uninteresting. These Readings were originally held in what was then the girls’ school-room, the room whose windows look into the playground,—although the girls who used it never could. But since Josiah Evans’s improvements to the Meeting-house, which included the substitution of gas for candles, the Readings took place in that building. There had been no change, however, in the character of the ceremony, which consisted of a period of silence, the reading of an extract from some book of Quaker or other Biography, or work descriptive of Missionary Travel, a chapter from the Bible, and another period of silence. All the reading was by the Head-master himself.

During Edmund Ashby’s administration it grew to be a custom, on Sunday evenings after tea, especially in the winter, for a few scholars to assemble in their own class-rooms, and to sing hymns round the fire. After a time the teachers joined these gatherings; and the number who met in this way increased until most of the School took part; no longer, however, assembling in separate class-rooms, but in the girls’ school-room, already alluded to. The result was that there were

practically two meetings; one for the singing of hymns, and one for the ordinary reading. The next step was to combine the two, and to hold, in the Meeting-house, a Sunday evening service, which included not only reading but singing. For a long time there was no sort of musical accompaniment; but much pains were taken beforehand in preparing for the occasion. At length, with some reluctance, the Committee agreed to the purchase of a harmonium.

"Those Sundays at Sidcot, thirty years ago," writes an old scholar, "were good days; peaceful, restful, happy days. But it would, I venture to think, be a mistake to suppose that the average boy ever has much real idea of religion. I remember the old Meeting-House well. I remember sitting there Sunday after Sunday, Wednesday after Wednesday, with what patience I might, watching the Friends under the gallery, the boys' teachers, the girls' teachers; sitting as stiff as a ramrod and as mute as a mummy, never turning my head, never moving, except when some minister knelt down to pray. So much did I meditate on Theodore Compton's watch-chain that when I grew up I had one made like it, in silver. I wear it still. I remember reading over and over the initials which some bored predecessor had audaciously carved in the woodwork of the form in front. Of higher things, I confess I remember very little.

"The evening hour of worship on Sunday evening was less difficult. The day's emotions had subsided; and the bright light and the open air no longer called to us in such insistent tones. Especially good it was when, on an inclement winter evening, the service was held in the girls' school-room instead of in the Meeting-House. What was it that made it good? The warmth and cosiness, the familiar room—into which, every morning, after breakfast, we were marched for Bible Reading—sleep near at hand, maps and a clock for roving thoughts and roving eyes to dwell on? Then there was Scripture Reading, too, and other reading; so much better for a boy than sterile silence. Perhaps the Head

Master spoke with more feeling and directness, in those surroundings and with no strangers present:—I don't remember that outsiders ever came to the Sunday evening reading. Somehow there brooded over us a sense of something good, a vague peacefulness, which was no doubt beneficial, although not comprehended at the time.

"The tone of the Sidcot of the seventies was pure and invigorating. Any deficiency in Education was far more than compensated by the fine, clear moral air in which we lived. I never heard, during the whole of my School life, a single impure word or suggestion."

"I have never known," writes another scholar of this period, "another place of worship that appealed to me as Sidcot Meeting-House does. Meeting was too often more or less of a penance then. But those quiet hours left a very definite impression, which the years have strengthened, not effaced. Of the Friends who laboured for our good, I remember little. I recollect how a well-known Friend, who lived, I think, at Yatton, walked into Meeting one day, quite unexpectedly, and in a state of evident agitation. Presently he rose, and disclosed to us, not without tears, that he had felt it laid upon him to visit and meet with us that morning; adding, in half-articulate tones, that it would probably be his last opportunity of doing so. It was certainly the last time I saw him at Sidcot. But I met him at Bristol Quarterly Meeting, this very year, really looking almost younger, and apparently not less vigorous than on that Sunday morning thirty years ago.

"Those were happy days. It was a joy to be at Sidcot. I am not ashamed to confess to having shed, on leaving it, as sorrowful tears as grief has ever drawn from me. And to-day it is my pride and joy to feel that I, too, was a scholar at 'the dear old School.'"

Of many visitors who, during Edmund Ashby's time, spent Sundays at Sidcot, and addressed the scholars at these gatherings, the names of Richard Ball Rutter, Frederic



Sessions, and Matilda Sturge are specially remembered. On the occasion of Richard Ball Rutter's first appearance in Sidcot Meeting, he touched in such a remarkable manner, both in the morning and the evening, upon a topic that at the time was agitating the School, a passing cloud which had brought a shadow on a large part of the community, that it was difficult to persuade the youthful audience that the speaker had known nothing of what had happened.

The School acquired four new pieces of property during this period, one by gift and three by purchase, one of the latter being of the highest importance to the Institution. In 1879 Benjamin Thomas presented the cottage behind the Meeting-house, now occupied by Lancaster the school coachman. In the same year the Committee bought the cottage adjoining the Five Acre field, which, with the enfranchisement of the copy-hold, cost £137, 10s. In 1892 Abraham Grace, having purchased Winterhead Hill Farm, an estate of 116 acres, for the sum of £1400, offered it to the School at the same figure, an offer which was gladly accepted, as part of the land dominated the School water-supply. Two years later, the Committee resold the farm, reserving, however, the part near the springs, of which 5 acres were planted with fir trees. A more important acquisition, however, than any of these, was that of the Longfield Estate, which comprised 26 acres of land, a lodge, and the house in which Joseph Benwell, and Thomas Ferris after him, had formerly carried on a well-known private school. Nine acres of this property, which was purchased in 1898 for £3000, were converted into a fine playing-field, which affords ample space for games for both boys and girls. The cost of removing hedges, levelling and preparing the ground, and building a pavilion was defrayed by the Old Scholars' Association.

Until Edmund Ashby's accession the Master of Sidcot School had been not only a schoolmaster but a farmer. It was as necessary that he should arrange for the rotation of



crops as for the due ordering of the curriculum. He had to pronounce on the maladies of cows and horses. He was expected to visit the fields in hay-time. He had to keep a watchful eye on the supply of milk and on the making of cheese. It was he who signed the warrants for the execution of pigs. But when Josiah Evans left, all this was changed. In order to lighten the work of the Head-master, and to liberate him for what had come to be regarded as his more legitimate labours, the School land was let to James Hemmens, who for many years had managed it under the late Superintendent, and who now bought the stock and the implements, paid a rent of £70 a year, and contracted to supply milk at a definite rate.

As has already been pointed out, the building alterations which transformed the School, the improvement in Education, and the increase of the Staff, were all rendered possible by that reorganisation of the finances which remains as one of the most striking achievements of this revolutionary period. It has been shown that, from its earliest foundation, the School was hampered for want of money. Although several estates were from time to time acquired by the Institution, some by gift and some by purchase, the revenue from which now constitutes the endowment, there was, to begin with, no endowment at all. One of these estates, that at Bridgwater, had, in the course of time, increased greatly in value, owing to the fact that much of it had been let on long building leases. Against this rise, a rise which of course increased the income of the establishment, must be set the fall in the annual subscriptions. Again, the re-building of the School in 1837-1838 had left a considerable debt, which had been added to, until it had become a heavy burden.

Many times had the Committee considered the situation. Very many times had they issued earnest appeals to Friends to be more mindful of their responsibilities, and to be more liberal with their subscriptions. But the appeals had fallen

upon unheeding ears. For twenty years before this period began—as the Committee pointed out to the General Meeting of 1874—the expenditure of the School had exceeded the income by about £200 a year. Unless its finances could be placed upon a sound footing it was idle to hope that the School could keep pace with other educational institutions; much less could it be expected to lead the van in the march of progress. The Committee gave it as their carefully considered judgment that the rates paid for schooling must be raised, and that the number of scholars entering at the lowest figure must be limited by the amount of the endowment. They proposed that the lowest rate from the Associated Meetings should be raised from £14 to £18, and that there should be four other rates, of £21, £25, £30 and £35; the last figure representing the actual cost. It was further proposed to admit twenty-five children at the lowest rate, fifteen at the second, thirty at the third, twenty at the fourth, and four only at the highest rate. If the School should at any time not be full, owing to a deficiency in the numbers of those paying the higher rates, more scholars must be admitted at the lower figures. It was added that all Friends who could afford to pay the full cost were expected to pay it. The following is a brief summary of the scheme of 1874, which has been modified in some important particulars, but which may be regarded as the foundation of the present satisfactory condition of the Institution:—

Revenue,	Expenditure.
The Endowment    £1050	Cost of 94 scholars £3290
Children's Payments    2255	Repairs                    .    65
Annual Subscriptions    150	Interest on Loans    .    100
<hr/> £3455	<hr/> £3455

The School was founded, as the Committee reminded the General Meeting, for two classes of constituents:—Firstly,

Poor Friends; and Secondly, those who could not well afford to send their children to other schools. This scheme, the promoters said, would benefit both classes, and would place the establishment in a permanently solvent position. The General Meeting concurred with the Committee's view, and the plan was adopted.

In 1875 it was further agreed to increase the amount set aside for repairs or renewal to £100. This sum was doubled in the following year, and was raised to £300 in 1882. In 1878 two higher rates, of £40 and £45, were introduced into the scale of payments; and at the same time it was decided that the boys and girls should, in future, pay for their school-books. This meant more than a mere financial gain. Under the old system the books had been handed down from one generation of scholars to another; some of them long after they had become obsolete; most of them suffering more or less from senile decay or from that state of dilapidation which is so apt to overtake books which are felt to be the property of the School, and in which the young users have no private and personal interest. In 1902, the last year of Edmund Ashby's administration, the rates were once more revised, in anticipation of the change from half-years to terms, which was to begin in the following year. The school-fees, including lessons in the gymnasium, work-shop and laboratory, which so far had been extras, were then fixed at £18, £24, £30, £33, £39, £45, £51, and £57 for the Associated Meetings. For the Non-Associated Meetings the minimum fee was to be £33. For scholars entitled to no share in the endowment, the lowest rate was to be £45.

It was perhaps only natural, when it was seen that the School, for the first time in its history, was paying its way, and was, to a great extent, supporting itself, that the Annual Subscriptions should suffer still further diminution. In 1886 the Monthly Meetings of Devon and Cornwall—the same meetings which contributed seven pounds towards the rebuilding of the premises in 1837 and 1838—declined to

subscribe any longer towards the support of the Institution. Eleven years later, when the total amount of the Annual Subscriptions had shrunk to less than fifty pounds, the Committee issued a circular, addressed to Friends of the Associated Meetings, pointing out that, although it was true that they had claims on the endowment, it was equally true that they had duties to perform in connection with the development of the School. No one could suppose that Friends, who as a body had once been in the fore-front of educational progress, should, when the country at large was waking up to the importance of this vital question, be willing to sit still with folded hands, and to look on with indifference. It is interesting to note that, for the four years following this appeal, the subscriptions showed some improvement; although, in 1900, they amounted to no more than £77, 5s.

Two important funds were established during this period: one for providing Scholarships, and one for giving Pensions to teachers after long service. The former, which was founded in 1888, was added to, partly by outside contributions and partly by an annual payment from the School, until, by the close of 1900, it amounted to £2500. The Pension Fund was founded in 1900—in which year the balance-sheet showed the largest surplus since the School was established—by setting aside the sum of £300: and it was intended that £200 should be added in every year in which the financial position admitted of it. Two servants of the Institution, however, had previously received small pensions. One of these was a laundry-woman who, after serving the School for many years, had, from age and infirmity, been obliged to give up her work. The other pensioner was William Day, once a miner in the Shipham calamine pits, who had managed the gas-works for forty years, and had thus been connected with the School longer than any one else, except Dr Wade. The first officer, however, to receive a definite pension was Amelia Davies, who,



after filling the post of girls' matron for the long period of thirty-three years, retired in 1900. And when, in the following year, Edmund Ashby laid his resignation before the Committee, it was agreed that his services to the School, whose prosperous condition was due, in very large measure, to his long and strenuous labours on its behalf, should be acknowledged by a life-annuity of £150 a year.

In addition to this official recognition of their services, the retiring Head-master and his wife, shortly before they left Sidcot, were presented, by some four hundred old scholars, teachers, Committee Friends, and others who had, in various ways, been connected with the School during the twenty-nine years, with a handsome testimonial, consisting of Edmund Ashby's portrait, painted by Percy Bigland, a carriage and all accessories, an oak sideboard, a silver tea-service, and an album containing the autographs of the subscribers. The presentation, which was made in the dining-hall before a crowded and most enthusiastic audience, by Alfred Bigland, as President, and Edward S. Reynolds, as Secretary of the Old Scholars' Association, was the occasion of many expressions of warm personal regard for Edmund and Eliza Ashby, and of cordial appreciation of their management of the School. Among the speakers was Mrs Basil P. Megahy, who, as Sarah Bradley, taught the Girls' First Class during a great part of this period, and under whose able and vigorous tuition the standard of education on that side of the house was so raised as to make possible that Joint Teaching which was one of the special features of Edmund Ashby's long administration.

The prosperity of the School may be gauged in various ways. When Edmund Ashby succeeded to the Head-mastership, in 1873, there were 91 scholars. When he left, in 1902, there were 132; and it is a very significant fact that the School was full during the entire period. Again, the value of the School property was estimated, in 1873, at £22,120. At the General Meeting of 1902 the figures were



reported to be £31,626. It may be added that the debt of £2750 with which the period began had been cleared off by the end of 1887. During the same period the annual average cost of each scholar rose materially, the chief increase being in salaries. In 1873-1874, when the cost was £34, 15s. 3d. per head, provisions made up £13, 17s. 3d., and salaries and wages £7, 19. 4d. of this amount. In 1902 the cost had grown to £43, 1s. 11d. But while the expenditure on food had fallen to £11, 12s. 7d., that on salaries had risen to £16, 1s. 10d. That is to say, the average annual payment on each of the 132 scholars amounted to more than one-third of the sum that, in the first year of the School's existence, had been spent on the salaries of all the officers put together.

Sidcot owes much to the two Friends who, in turn, filled the office of Treasurer to the Committee during Edmund Ashby's Head-mastership. Richard Fry was a prominent and notable figure at the earlier General Meetings of the period, usually driving a pair of horses from Bristol. No one who came in contact with the grave and dignified Treasurer could fail to be struck with the courtesy with which he greeted all attenders of the Meeting, at which he took the lead in seeing that everything was done in due order.

Richard Fry was succeeded by John Gayner, whose long term of office was marked by a deep interest in the welfare of the School and all connected with it. His genuine sympathy was extended, not only to the scholars and the Staff, but to the servants and men employed, and to the tenants of the estate.

## CHAPTER XI

BEVAN LEAN, D.SC., B.A., LATE DALTON CHEMICAL SCHOLAR  
AND BERKELEY FELLOW OF OWENS COLLEGE,

1902

As was shown in the previous chapter, the long administration of Edmund Ashby was characterised by extensive alterations and additions to the School buildings, by the institution, first of Departmental Teaching, and secondly of a considerable amount of partial Co-education in the shape of mixed classes of boys and girls, by an increase in the Staff, and by the reform of the financial system. The government of Dr Bevan Lean, which has not yet lasted quite six years, has been distinguished by the entire reorganisation of the methods of teaching, including the adoption of complete Co-education in every department of school work and life, and a more advanced standard of attainment involving a higher age-limit and a further increase in the Staff of teachers and other officers. Improvements of great moment have also been introduced into the social conditions of the School, while the establishment of a considerable amount of self-government by the institution of prefects, will, it is believed, be found to exert a marked influence for good in the training of both boys and girls. As parts of an extended scheme of structural alterations, some very important additions have been made to the premises since 1902, including the Head-master's house, a new sanatorium, new lavatories for the boys, an extension of the boys' bedroom accommodation, new bath-rooms, one for each side of the house, a steam-laundry, a girls' natural history room, the adaptation of the old sanatorium as a house of residence for



*Elliott & Fry, London.*

*Bevan*

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some of the older girls, and works for the septic treatment of sewage.

Further improvements, which are urgently required, and which it is hoped the School may shortly be enabled to accomplish, will include the remodelling of the kitchen and domestic offices, the provision of a library and of adequate accommodation for the teaching of science, art and needle-work.

In the later years of the previous period boys and girls had been taught together during part of the day. But in other respects the old plan prevailed, and they were still, to a great extent, kept apart. Thus, although they took their meals in the same room, they sat at separate tables. Their Literary and Scientific Societies were distinct, and they never joined in games on the field or on the playground.

In all these respects the conditions of life at Sidcot have been changed. In 1903 the old arrangement of classes was superseded by that of forms, of which there are now eight, known as the Second, which is the lowest, the Lower and Upper Third, Lower and Upper Fourth, Lower and Upper Fifth, and the Sixth, each of which is made up, entirely according to attainment, of boys and girls, who are not only taught together, but who sit in class order. Classes are, however, separate in Gymnastic Training, and some forms are taught separately in Scripture. Boys and girls also sit together at meals, each form-division at its own table. Membership in the various societies for the encouragement of leisure-pursuits is open equally to both sides of the house. Boys and girls of the Second and of the Lower Third Forms join at games almost daily; those of the upper forms do so occasionally, especially at hockey. The younger boys and girls also meet during the Nature-study walks, which form part of the regular curriculum, and are taken in school-hours; and the prefects, who are chosen from both sides of the house, also have supper together. The principle of Co-education has thus, through the influence of Dr Bevan Lean,



been adopted to a degree not only previously unknown at Sidcot, but very rare among the schools of England.

It was a bold venture. Not because there was anything really hazardous in it, or because there was any real ground for doubting its success, but because the world has, in the lapse of ages, grown so accustomed to the idea that separate schools were necessary that it looks askance at what it regards as a novel and dangerous experiment; at the introduction of a method which, so its opponents declare, must tend to make the girls rough and boys unmanly. But the method is not novel. It is as old as learning itself. It is not Co-education that is new. It is the separation of the sexes that is the innovation. Before the Fall of the Roman Empire boys and girls were taught together. But in the Dark Ages, when learning was so rare that for a convicted murderer to be able to read a few words was sufficient to save him from the gallows, all education was in the hands of the monastic orders; and it naturally followed that the monks taught the boys, while the girls were left to the care of the nuns. When the monasteries were suppressed, part of their vast wealth was well applied to the establishment of schools. But they were schools for boys alone. The girls were forgotten. "Generally speaking," write Messrs Grey and Tylee, in *Boy and Girl*, "girls were not taught anything at all beyond the merest elements of reading and writing. . . . The new grammar-schools were monopolised by boys, apparently without the slightest idea on the part of their founders that any wrong was being committed. Custom had hardened into tradition; and people, having been so long used to seeing boys and girls educated in separate schools, had come to consider such an arrangement as not only natural but necessary. But the effects of the separation were none the less deplorable. If life at the great boys' schools became rough, manners uncouth, and discipline brutal, these were but the inevitable consequences of the exclusion of the other sex from all share in their economy. Still more fatal was



THE NEW APPROACH TO THE SCHOOL, THE HEADMASTER'S HOUSE ON THE LEFT



the effect on female education. For nearly three centuries, women, with a few rare and fortunate exceptions, were entirely deprived of any instruction worthy of the name. The result was seen in the unspeakable degradation of society during the Stuart and Georgian reigns; the cynical contempt for women shown in the literature of the time, and the utter lack of any efficient public opinion."

We are slow to move in this country. As a nation we still cling to methods of barbarism. But a very different state of things prevails in America, fully five-sixths of whose population have been taught in Co-educational schools. It has sometimes been said, by opponents of the system, that the American nation is finding out that Co-education is, after all, a mistake, and that a reaction is setting in against it. Not only is this theory not borne out by inquiries on the spot, but it is finally disposed of by the statements of the American Commissioner of Education, Dr Elmer Ellsworth Brown, who, in reply to a letter from the present writer, uses these words:—

"Co-education is a policy so thoroughly established in the public schools of the United States that the question of its desirability has ceased to be agitated; at least so far as it relates to grades below the high-school age. . . . Recently, a few experiments have been made in the West, looking to the separation of boys and girls during the high-school period. These, however, and occasional discussions of the advisability of Co-education in colleges and universities, indicate simply the disposition to modify methods and practices in education according to circumstances." And although the principle is not so general, in America, in the case of those who have reached what may be called the high-school age, the writer has the highest authority for saying that even of these, "Three-fifths of those who go on to colleges and universities . . . attend institutions in which Co-education has been adopted."

It is the opinion of those who have carefully watched the

system at work, both in the United States and in the few English schools where the authorities have been wise enough to adopt the better way, that the presence of girls has an excellent effect upon the manners and bearing of the boys, making them not only more considerate and courteous, but more orderly and industrious; and, on the other hand, that the method is to the full as advantageous for the girls. "It is found," writes Messrs Grey and Tylee, "that the Co-education of boys and girls, so far from producing the untoward results which some anticipate, has the happiest influence on the tone and discipline of our schools, and on the conduct and character of the pupils. That the presence of the girls makes the boys keener at work, heartier at play, gentler and more chivalrous to the weak, without the smallest sacrifice of courage or true manliness. That the girls gain still more by the association, acquiring frankness and bravery, a higher standard of honour, a deeper regard for truth. That in both, the system quickens the sense of responsibility, discourages sentimental frivolity, and prepares the growing youth and maiden to live and work together in after life."

Sidcot, which, in adopting the principle in every detail, has taken its place in the front rank of educational progress, has the same tale to tell. It is the opinion of all who are closely associated with the School, that here also the introduction of Co-education has been an unqualified success. The view of a boy who left Sidcot a few years ago is that "while a half-hearted and incomplete system of Co-education seemed to foster sentimentality, the close association of boys and girls has proved a very effectual barrier to it. Not only so, but as far as the boys are concerned, I am certain that it has been the means of greatly improving the standard of honour and purity." A girl's verdict is that "it made the boys more courteous and considerate, and more attentive and better-mannered at meals; that it made the girls more sensible and independent, and less inclined to blush and



giggle; and that it gave to both a better and truer appreciation of each other."

One very marked effect has been in the greatly increased brightness of the social atmosphere, a fact which must strike every one who is privileged to take a meal with the boys and girls of the present day.

In 1808, the first year of the School's existence, the household was managed and the work of teaching carried on by four officers—the Superintendent and his wife, one teacher for the boys and one for the girls; and there were times in the early history of the Institution when the number was even smaller still. There were, in addition, one manservant and two maid-servants, or seven people in all, while the number of scholars was then twenty-three. At the present day, with one hundred and forty-four scholars in the School, the Staff consists of the Head-master and his wife, with seven men and ten women teachers, including instructors in music and athletics, a master-on-duty and a mistress-on-duty; together with a secretary, a typist, a housekeeper, a trained nurse, two matrons, a lady-cook and twelve maid-servants, two house-boys, a stoker, a gas-man, a coachman, a carpenter, and two gardeners. The doctor, also, since he has a fixed salary and visits the School every day, may be regarded as a member of the Staff. The officers of all ranks thus number forty more than the seven of a century ago. Seven of the present Staff have University degrees, while nearly all those who are engaged in the work of teaching hold diplomas or certificates of proficiency.

Nearly every member of the teaching Staff has now a separate sitting-room or bed-sitting-room, a contrast indeed with the days—which are within the memory of some who are still engaged at the School—when one small study on each side of the house was considered quite sufficient, and when the teachers' bedrooms were scanty and comfortless wooden partitions in corners of the general dormitories.

In 1903 Sidcot was recognised by Government as a school

for the Training of Student Teachers for the Diploma in the Theory and Practice of Education of the University of Cambridge. Some students who are taking the Educational Course at Oxford University also pay visits to Sidcot, with the special object of Science-training, usually staying about a month. Such students join in the life of the School, attend some classes and give a few lessons under supervision.

The Course of Study for Sidcot boys of a century ago included only Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography and Scripture; and part of their school-time was also devoted to working on the farm or in the garden. The girls, whose subjects of instruction were the same as those of what was, from its position, spoken of as the Upper House, spent much time on Sewing, Knitting and Mending, and also assisted in the kitchen and in the laundry. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Government Inspectors who visited the School in 1907 suggested in their Report that if suitable arrangements could be made in the new building-scheme, a course of Cookery-lessons would be of great benefit to the girls. In the early days of the School's history boys left when they were fourteen. Girls might, under certain circumstances, stay a year longer.

At the present day, the boys and girls of the Sixth or highest Form, which includes scholars of seventeen and eighteen years of age, are prepared for what is called the School Leaving Examination of the standard of the Matriculation for the University of London. The questions set in this examination, which takes place in December, just before the holidays, are not, of course, the same as those taken by the general run of Matriculation candidates; but the standard is the same, and the examination has the same value towards the taking of a University degree. The boys and girls of the Upper Fifth Form are prepared for the Senior, and those of the Lower Fifth for the Junior Cambridge Local Examination.

The work in the middle part of the School is arranged on

a Four Years' Course, on the requirements of the Board of Education; and to this course the work of the two lower forms may be regarded as preparatory. The forms are arranged in January, and are not altered except by the losses caused through the leaving of scholars, and through the additions from new comers, during the remainder of the year.

Speaking generally, it may be said that the Education given at Sidcot School is characterised by the great amount of attention paid to English subjects and to Science. A feature of the lessons in History and Geography is the care taken to familiarize the scholars with the historic associations and the physical details of the neighbourhood and of the county, the former of which are of the highest interest and importance. French is taught throughout the School, but pupils do not commence Latin before reaching the Upper Third Form. A small proportion of the children who come to Sidcot are not members of the Society of Friends; but no difference in religious instruction is made in their case, and no difficulty is or ever has been experienced on this account.

The work of the School is by no means confined to the more or less time-honoured subjects prescribed by the London or Cambridge examiners, but embraces also the practical study of Natural History, for which the surrounding district offers great facilities, Physical Training (including Gymnastics and Swimming), Music and Singing, Drawing and Painting, Carpentry and Needlework. Nor would it be giving anything like an adequate idea of the training received at Sidcot to suggest that the attention of the authorities was merely confined to a scheme so comprehensive even as this; to ordinary lessons or to physical exercises or to the development of literary or artistic or musical talent. Letters from those who have not long left the School speak in the warmest terms of the unremitting and watchful care which is taken to mould life and character aright.

Education at Sidcot has the very substantial advantage of

starting at a higher level than was formerly the case. In early times it was a common thing for children to come to school knowing little or nothing. Even within the writer's experience it was found that one of the new scholars was ignorant even of the alphabet. Now, before entering, pupils—none of whom are admitted below the age of ten—must have reached a certain standard of knowledge, which is ascertained either from the reports of the Heads of previous schools or by means of examination papers.

In addition to the examinations already referred to, candidates are also prepared for those of the Joint Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, and for that of the London Institution for the Advancement of Needlework. An Inspector sent down by the Board of Education visited the School regularly until the Committee, in deference to the recommendation of the Friends' Yearly Meeting, decided to give up the Government Grant; and once in three or four years the Board of Education makes an exhaustive examination, entering thoroughly into every detail of school-work and life. The last of these inspections was in 1907, and the results were embodied in a long and eulogistic and most interesting report, which was read at the following General Meeting, and has since been printed in full.

Two Scholarships of the value of £50 each are open for competition in December of each year to boys and girls who have completed two years' residence. They may be taken by a boy and a girl, or by two boys or two girls. It is required that, together with evidence of ability, there must be a capacity for steady work; and candidates must have taken a helpful place in the general life of the School. All interests, both in school and out, are taken into account in awarding the Scholarships.

Sidcot has long been distinguished for the attention which it has devoted to Science; and the arrangements of the present day enable it to more than maintain its past reputation.







NATURE - TULSA

Every scholar in the Fifth Form, for example, devotes five lesson-periods a week to some scientific subject. The Science-work in the lower part of the School—that is to say, in the Second and Third Forms—consists of Nature-study, largely carried on in the open air, when the scholars are trained, by a skilled and enthusiastic naturalist, to observe and to take an interest in the abundant wild life of the district, its beasts and birds, reptiles and fish, shells and insects, and to study its plants and fossils. The keeping of pet animals, especially of such apparently unlikely subjects as snakes and lizards, and the maintenance of an aquarium, have done much to foster a love for Nature and her children. There is a naturalist's room on each side; and the girls have also a house for their various live creatures.

On entering the Upper Third Form, every scholar, while continuing Nature-study work in the class-room—especially the physiological and interesting side of Botany, such as the growth of seedlings and bulbs, of fronds and leaves—begins a course of training in Practical Physics, including measurements of length, area and volume, together with occasional lessons in the laboratory. In the Lower Fourth Form scholars begin the course marked out in the "Introduction to Chemistry and Physics," by Dr W. H. Perkin and Dr Bevan Lean; and this course is continued in the higher forms. The Science-work of the Lower Fifth Form is arranged to suit the syllabus of the Junior Cambridge Local Examination. The Sixth Form follows the course prescribed by the curriculum of the Matriculation Examination of London University.

Speaking generally, it may be said that the main idea, in the Science-work of Sidcot School, is to teach the scholars "how to learn, not from books alone, but by direct contact with realities . . . keeping in view the growing feeling that the methods of gaining knowledge are often of more educational value than the knowledge itself."

Modern methods of education have done away with the old

system, under which almost every lesson lasted an hour, and might even be drawn out to twice that length. Scholars of forty-five years ago can remember spending, not an afternoon only, but the afternoons of a whole week in learning Geography; and that, not from a map or an atlas, but from a book. The regulation lesson-period now, except in the case of Science, Drawing and Mathematics, is forty-five minutes. Work begins at a quarter to nine, and lasts, with brief intervals, until a quarter to one. Monday afternoon is devoted to compulsory games, Wednesday afternoon to games or to Natural History Walks, and Saturday afternoon to matches or to expeditions. It may be added that Saturday afternoon is now the only actual half-holiday. Work on the three remaining afternoons lasts from a quarter to three to a quarter to five. The evenings are occupied partly by preparation for the next day's classes, partly by choral singing, and partly by leisure pursuits or by the Meetings of the various societies.

Music is a subject which has made great advance during the present administration, and has attained a high degree of excellence. The teaching, which is especially well organised, is in the hands of four instructors, two lady-teachers of the pianoforte, a master of singing, who also takes a few piano pupils, and a visiting lady-teacher of the violin and the violoncello. Fifty girls and fifteen boys learn the piano, and there are fifteen violin pupils. But every boy and girl in the School receives some amount of musical training in the shape of Choral Practice, which is held almost every evening for half an hour in the dining-hall, and at which attendance is compulsory. In this way the scholars as a whole frequently join in rounds and school-songs. The Choral Practice is, however, mainly carried on by the choir, composed of those who can read music, and including from sixty to eighty voices. The chief work of this choir, which owes much to the assistance of a staff exceptionally strong in musical talent, consists of part-music of all kinds, the better-known English

three- and four-part songs, anthems, and choruses from great oratorios. A band or orchestra, with four first and five second violins, a viola, two violoncellos, a double-bass and a pianoforte, practises every Thursday evening, under the direction of the violin-teacher.

Singing classes are held daily in the Second Form, when the *sol-fa* system is taught, and voice and ear training are practised, together with some part-singing and rounds. Similar lessons in the Lower Third Form include, in addition, the best known English songs, while the Upper Third have one lesson a week, in which the same work is continued. There is a weekly class on the Theory of Music, in connection with the Cambridge Local Examinations, and the Lower and Upper Fifth Forms also have weekly lessons in voice-production, with a special view to good speaking and clear reading. Marked success has attended the painstaking efforts of the Singing Master to overcome stammering on the part of some of the scholars.

The School gives an annual concert in the village, in aid of some philanthropic object; and there are other musical entertainments on special occasions, such as Old Scholars' gatherings. At intervals of three or four weeks there are also half-hour concerts, at which musicians at all stages are afforded opportunities of practising in public; while, on wet Sunday afternoons, short musical recitals are sometimes given, by scholars and by members of the Staff.

With the idea of fostering a taste for good music, arrangements are made by which a large proportion of the household are able to enjoy the Oratorios which are annually performed in the Cathedral at Wells. Sidcot scholars have thus been privileged to form part of the audience at the rendering of the "Elijah," the "Hymn of Praise," and the "St Paul." At the last of these, in November 1907, ninety-one of those connected with the School were present; a proceeding which would certainly have horrified Friends of fifty or even of thirty years ago, but which cannot fail to have had an



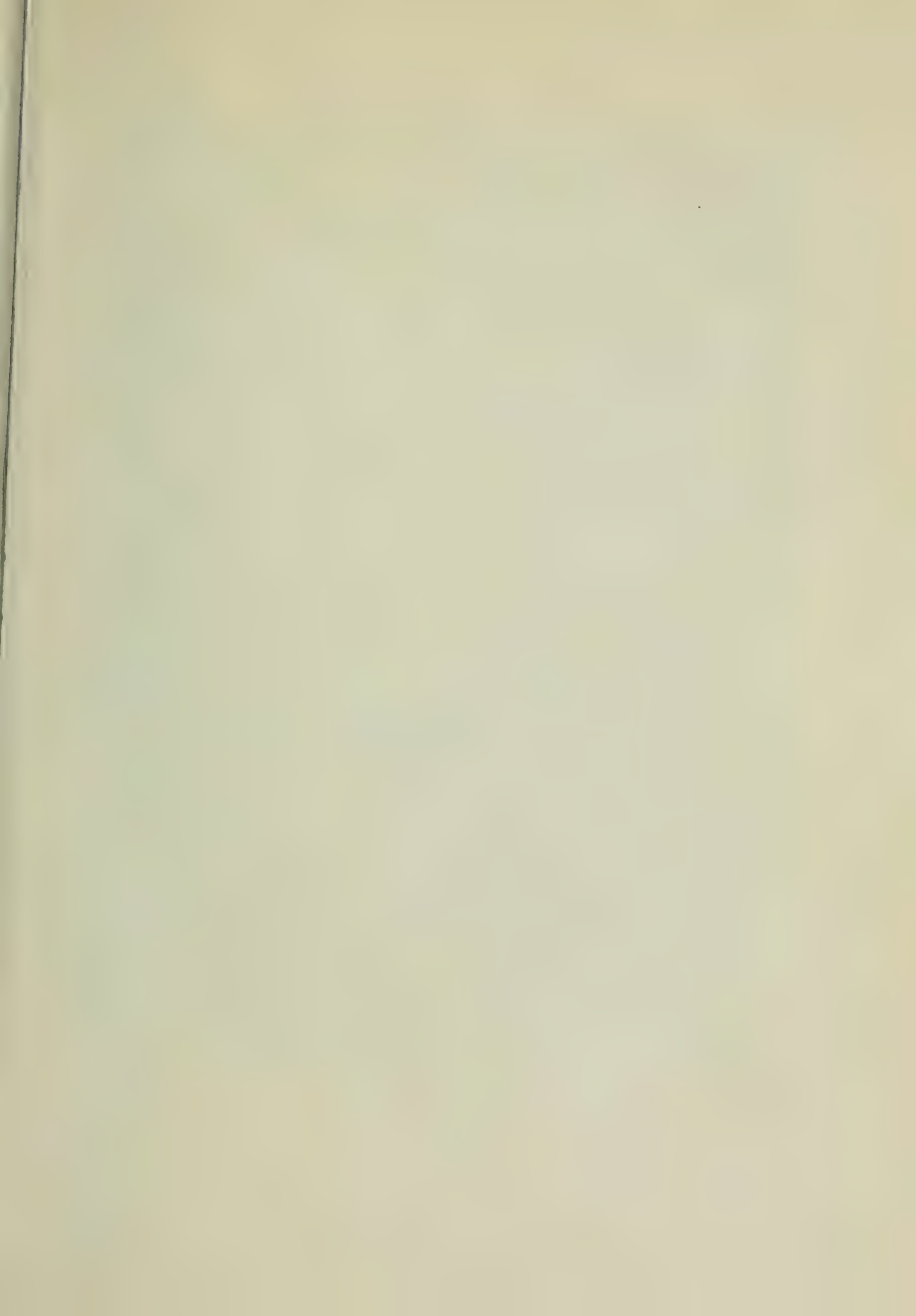
influence for good in promoting the love of the best and noblest music.

Physical Training is a special point at Sidcot, every scholar receiving at least two lessons a week in Ling's Swedish Gymnastic System. Public displays are occasionally given; and a trophy, in the form of a wooden shield, is competed for by the boys, every winter. The Third Form have held it for the last three years. English Gymnastics are also encouraged among the boys by the Head-master's trophy, a framed print of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair," offered for voluntary work, which, however, has of late years become mainly confined to the Lower School, owing to the demands made upon the time of those whose tastes lie in the direction of Scientific or Literary or Artistic pursuits. This trophy is competed for in a series of tournaments, contested by one or more squads of six or eight boys from each Form. The winning team holds the picture for a year, and it is at present the property of the Upper Third Form. In addition to these trophies, the names of the Senior Champions in the annual Athletic Sports are engraved on the Old Scholars' silver challenge cup, and also on a shield made of hammered silver and encircled by a scroll-like wreath of copper, which was designed by T. Beaven Clark.

Another Athletic Trophy is a print of one of Hobbema's pictures, given by the Old Scholars' Association, to be competed for by girl Hockey-teams, representing the separate Forms; the winners keeping it for a year. It hangs at present in the Third Form room. A prize racquet is given every year by an Old Scholar to the winner of the Girls' Tennis Tournament.

Each Form has two weekly lessons in Swimming; in addition to which there is, from April to November, a brief early morning bathe for boys of the Upper School, a general bathe every day during two terms, a non-swimmers' bathe on Thursday evenings, and a life-saving class on Friday evenings in the summer-time. An aquatic display, consisting







THE WORKSHOP

of swimming and diving contests, is given annually in July. The names of the champion swimmers of each year, both boys and girls, are engraved on a shield of brass and copper, designed, like the Athletic Trophy, by T. Beaven Clark. A gold chain, offered to the champion boy-swimmer of each year, becomes the absolute property of the winner, if gained for three years in succession. Similar conditions are attached to the gold brooch which is competed for by the girls. It is worthy of note that each of these trophies has in this way lately been won outright. In the early twenties, when there was no bath, and when bathing was occasionally allowed in the River Axe, at a point some miles from Sidcot, only one boy in the School could swim. At the present time, sixty-seven boys and forty-five girls can swim at least the length of the bath.

There has been a workshop at Sidcot from the earliest days of the School's existence; but until comparatively recent times Carpentry was solely a leisure occupation. At the present day a regular course of Joinery forms part of the curriculum of all boys except those in the Fifth and Sixth Forms; and the scholars have the great advantage of careful and systematic training by one of the Staff, under whose skilful direction a high standard of excellence has been attained. The Four Years' Course includes the construction of thirty graduated models, of each of which a plan elevation and projection must be made before the actual work, which involves the use of all ordinary tools, is begun. Lessons are also given on the construction, uses and treatment of tools, and on the growth, felling, seasoning and uses of timber. Good as the work has been so far, it may be confidently expected that the recent generous promise, by James Tangye, of all the costly apparatus and appliances of his own elaborately equipped workshop, will lead to results greater and more striking still.

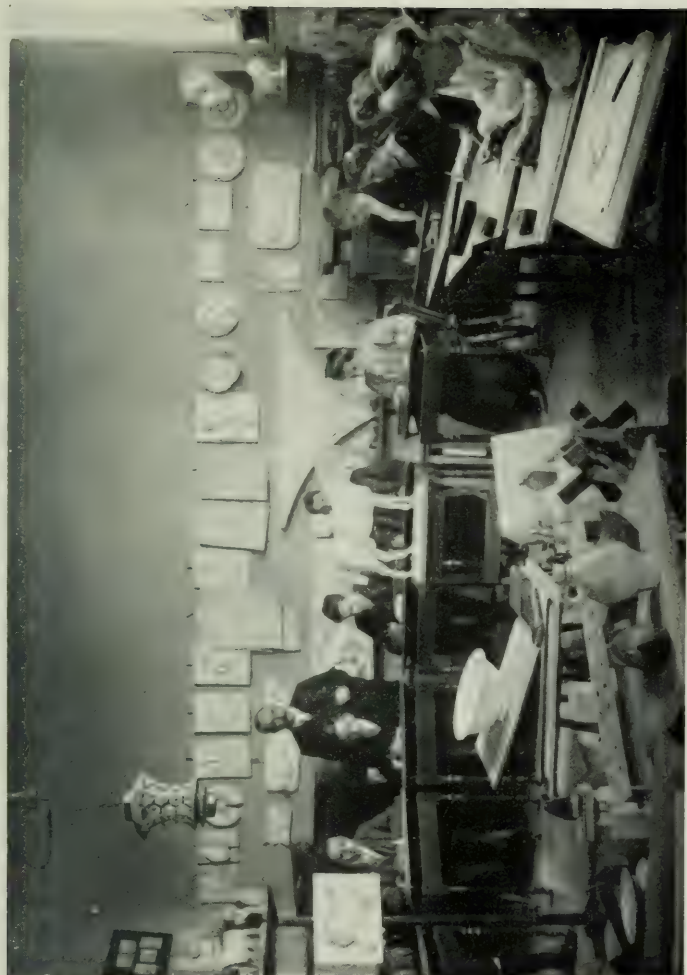
What may be regarded as a corresponding occupation on the girls' side of the house is a Four Years' Course of

Needlework, practically identical with that of the London Institute for the Advancement of Needlework. The girls also mend their own clothes, under regular supervision.

It was during Edmund Ashby's administration that a professional teacher of Drawing was—through the generosity of the Old Scholars' Association—first employed at Sidcot, although there was then no special room for the use of Art-students, and the appliances in the shape of models were few. There is now a well-lighted although rather small studio, amply supplied with models, casts and other objects of study; and all the scholars have two lessons a week from one of the resident Staff.

The Course is a wide one, and consists mainly in studies from the round in outline, black and white, and colour; in copying good examples from the flat and classic ornaments from the cast; in simple brush-work and elementary design, and in the drawing of plants from nature. In addition to the regular school-work, two voluntary classes, attended by some twelve or fifteen pupils, are held weekly. The Art-work accomplished under these conditions is abundant and successful, but very little Drawing or Painting is now done in leisure-time, owing partly to long school-hours and partly to the time occupied by work in connection with the various societies.

These societies, now no fewer than six in number, play highly important parts in the life of the School, and serve as most valuable instruments in the training of both boys and girls, since membership in all of them is open to both sides of the house. The Literary Societies, Senior and Junior, meet fortnightly, chiefly for the reading of essays, the former varying its proceedings with musical intervals. At the Annual Meetings, that of the seniors in November and of the juniors in March, the time has lately been devoted to Dramatic Representations, instead, as was formerly the case, to the reading of Essays. The Senior Association has in this way acted scenes from *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Princess*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.



THE ART ROOM





The scientific work which, in former days, was done by the Literary Society, is now the province of the Natural History Societies, Senior and Junior, at whose meetings, also held fortnightly, papers, illustrated by diagrams, models, or specimens, are read, and addresses delivered, which are usually accompanied by comments and discussion. There are many enthusiastic nature-lovers, on both sides of the house, but comparatively little is now done in forming Collections of objects of Natural History, which, involving, as they do, the taking and handling and examination of fresh specimens, lend such reality to the various pursuits, and go so far towards the making of a naturalist. It is, moreover, only in the Junior Association that Curators now produce those Reports of Observations which formed so prominent a feature in the Literary Meetings of thirty or forty years ago. It may here be noted that the School still possesses the fine set of Meteorological instruments presented to it by Joseph Pease in Josiah Evans's time, and that James Tangye, in addition to his promise of workshop appliances, has also promised to the Institution the entire contents of his Observatory, for which provision will be made in the new buildings.

Not a few boys and girls are interested in Archæology and in Church Architecture, pursuits for which the district offers many advantages; and the members of the Senior Natural History and Archæological Society—to give it its full title—pay a yearly visit to Wells, for the sake of an object-lesson on the architecture of its beautiful cathedral. Both Societies have also annual summer excursions, the juniors to some favourite spot within walking-distance of the School, and the seniors to Brean Down, which is still the Naturalists' paradise that it has been to generations of Sidcot scholars, with the same flowers and the same birds, the same wind-blown sand-hills and the same sweet odour of the sea.

In the spring of 1907 the two Natural History Societies

combined to hold a highly successful *Conversazione*, when many interesting objects illustrative of the Natural History and Archæology were shown, and when papers on "The Birds of the Tanner Bequest"—the collection formed by Arthur Tanner, and lately bequeathed to the School by his widow, Margaret Tanner—by Louie M. Rowe Dutton; on "Animals which Clean Themselves," by John A. Dell, M.Sc.; on "The Church Towers of Somerset," by M. Winifred Scott, and on many other subjects, were read.

The Photographic Society, or Camera Club, is a small but enthusiastic association, with a membership limited to twelve boys and twelve girls, in addition to members of the School Staff. Expeditions are made fortnightly, and good work has been done in photographing woodland scenery and birds' nests. Once in three weeks meetings are held, at which prints are shown and papers read, with occasional demonstrations of special processes. There is a dark-room on each side, accessible to all scholars; and the Camera Club has the exclusive use of a third, in the old laboratory in the Long Garden, now fitted up with all appliances, and where ten members can work at once.

The Mechanical Society, the youngest of the associations, started at the wish of some boys of the Upper School, who belonged to no other society, now consists of fifteen members, including some girls. At the meetings, which are held once in three weeks, and in the winter only, papers have been read on such subjects as "Internal Combustion Engines," "Locks, Ancient and Modern," "The Preparation of Water-Gas."

The erection of boys' offices in the enclosure between the School and the Friends' Burial-ground has much diminished the area formerly allotted to the boys' gardens, and of these there are now only sixteen. The girls' gardens still occupy a strip along the edge of their playground, from which the balls are now kept out by means of wire-netting. Perhaps there has never been a time in the history of the School

when gardening, by both boys and girls, was more encouraged, or carried on with more spirit and success.

Several small newspapers or periodicals, usually in manuscript, have appeared at various times since the School began. In William Batt's reign, it may be remembered, there were two, both of which were printed by the boys themselves. An illustrated magazine called *The Island*, conducted by the scholars, and appearing once each term, has lately been established, and has a circulation of between two hundred and two hundred and fifty.

In the old days the rooms occupied by the scholars were bare and comfortless, and possessed no ornaments but maps. In a few cases there were, it is true, some plaster busts and casts; but these, it is to be feared, served rather as tests of marksmanship than as a means of elevating a taste for Art or of increasing dexterity in Drawing. Of late years, however, the practice of decorating the various rooms with pictures—a practice which began in 1864, with the placing in the boys' first class room of a fine water-colour drawing of Skiddaw, by William Arnee Frank—has done much to soften the austerity that was so dear to the souls of our ancestors. In the dining-hall, for example, there are now hung, in addition to the autotypes composing the Lough Neagh Memorial, referred to on a later page, beautiful prints of *The Two Crowns*, *Love and Life*, *Love and Death*, Percy Bigland's portrait of Edmund Ashby, prints of the same artist's paintings of Gladstone and of *The Quaker Wedding*, Sargent's *Frieze of the Prophets*, a portrait of Joseph Sturge the Philanthropist, who was one of John Benwell's Sidcot scholars, and various other pictures. The dormitories, again, are rendered much brighter and more home-like by means of photographs and other decorations.

The chief boys' games at Sidcot have, for some years past, been cricket and football, in which many matches, both at home and away, are played during their respective seasons. Hockey is less popular than it was, and few contests are

played with other teams. Running games, such as Prison-bar, Blackthorn, and Cock-warning, once so popular, are now obsolete.

The girls' games are lawn-tennis, for which there are now four courts,—two of asphalt and two of grass,—net-ball, cricket and hockey. Matches with teams from other clubs are confined to the last of these.

Games are compulsory for all on Monday afternoons, and on Wednesdays for all except members of the Natural History Societies and of the Camera Club. In wet weather, or when it is too rough to play in the field, the boys, divided into three sets according to age, go for cross-country runs, with the idea of ensuring vigorous exercise, under healthy conditions, for every boy who is physically fit for it. Four routes have been arranged for each division, or twelve in all. For example, when the seniors are set to run up Oakridge Lane, past Eagle Crag and Tyning Farm to Black Down, and home by way of Rowberrow and the Star, the line for the second lot may be round Winscombe, Maxmills and Banwell, and back through the Sandford fields; while, at the same time, the third division may be running by Oakridge Lane, Callow and Shute Shelve to Winscombe, and then straight home. Before starting, all the runners change into their cricket or football costume, according to the season, just as they would if going to the playing-field. On the occasion of the Annual Sports, at Easter, a gold medal is given by J. Foster Stackhouse to the winner of that particular cross-country run. On Mondays and Wednesdays boys and girls play in the same field; but except for occasional mixed hockey-matches, their games are separate. Boys and girls of the Lower School, however, join at games on the playground. The time-honoured game of Terza not only still holds its own, but, since the more natural association of boys and girls under the modern system of complete Co-education, is played with more heartiness and more real and unalloyed enjoyment than ever; more particularly, of course, on such occasions as Old







Scholars' gatherings, and at Easter and the General Meeting.

During the last two summer holidays, with the idea of interesting Sidcot scholars in Social Work, a few of the masters and a dozen or more of the boys have invited lads from the Friends' Adult Schools in Bristol to join them for a week of tent-life, with the happiest and most encouraging results. The camp of 1906 was near Bridgend in Glamorgan, close to the mouth of the river Ogmore. In 1907 a composite party of forty-eight campers spent seven pleasant days under canvas by the sea-shore at Berrow, between Brean Down and Burnham.

The boys and girls have, for many years past, taken their meals in the same room; but they now sit together, each Form-division at its own table, which is presided over by two members of the Staff, who change fortnightly, or, in case of their absence, by Prefects. The girls at each table change their places every week, but the boys retain the same seats throughout the term. Scholars occupying end seats act as waiters. It will be seen that the old plan of arranging the children in size-order has been abandoned in favour of the much more rational method described above. A similar change has been made in the order of sitting in Meeting.

Sidcot scholars of forty years ago will see an even greater change in the character, quality and variety of the meals themselves. The recent eulogistic report by S. H. Davies, M.Sc., on the fare provided by the School, and on the household arrangements generally, has led the authorities to decide that in future no private stores of cake, jam, or similar luxuries—except fresh fruit—are to be allowed.

The health of the School during the past six years has on the whole been good, as, indeed, might be expected in a spot so favourably situated among the hills, and in an Institution with such complete arrangements for the personal care and well-being of the scholars. There have, indeed, been cases

of illness, as is inevitable in so large a household; but the patients have, in all instances, been favoured to recover.

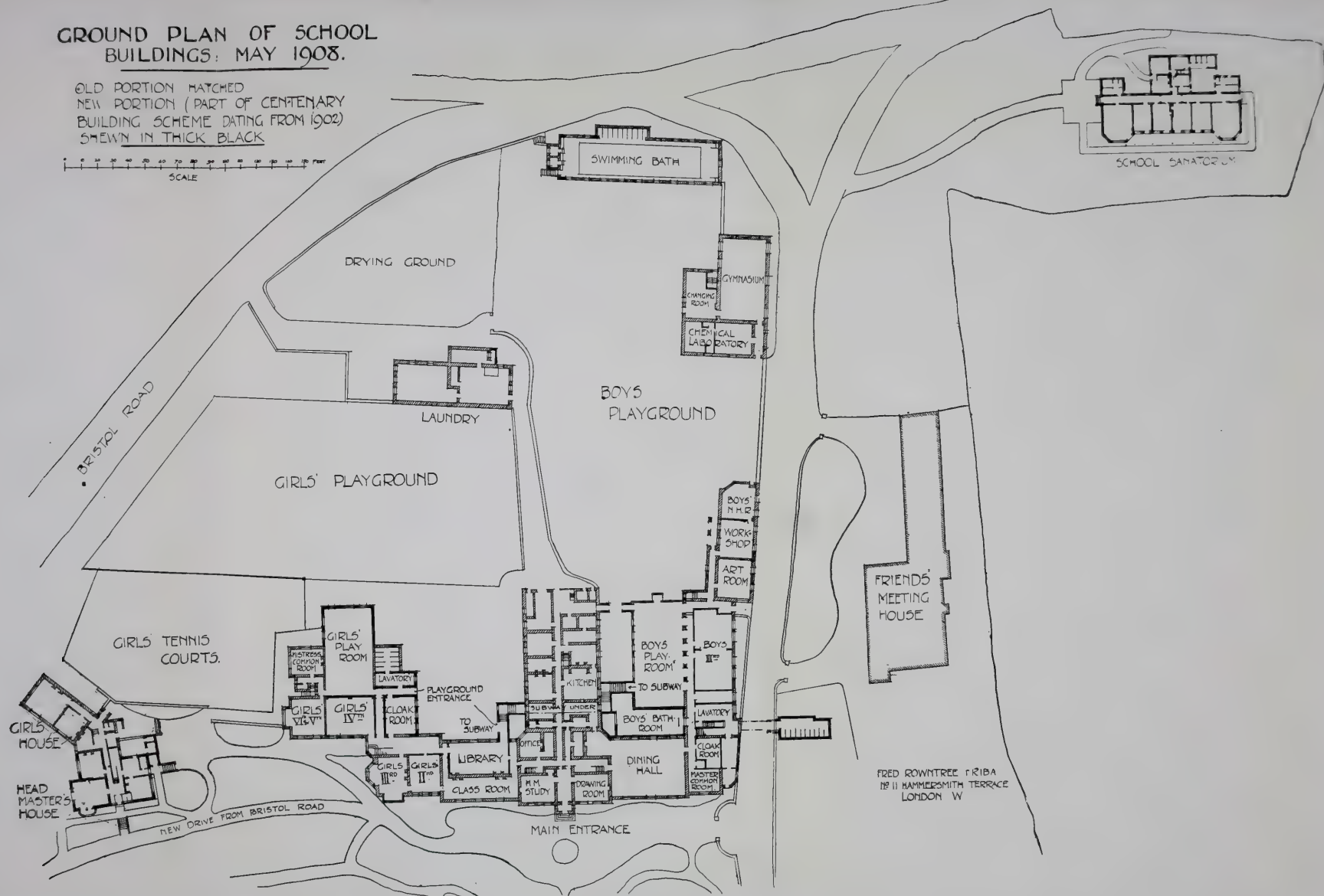
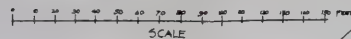
The only new property that has been acquired by the School during this period is the house called Elm Cottage, at the bottom of the Long Garden, which was purchased in 1906 for £200.

It will be interesting at this point briefly to compare some of the financial conditions of the Sidcot of a century ago with those that prevail at the present day. By the end of 1808, when the School had been established four months, there were twenty-three scholars; and at the time of the General Meeting of 1809 there were twenty-nine, all of whom were Friends, and who paid a uniform fee of £14, to which 4s. 4d. was added for pocket-money, at the rate of a penny a week. The annual cost, to judge from the Report on the first completed year, was about £24 a head. The numbers in the School now are seventy-nine boys and sixty-five girls, or a hundred and forty-four in all, eighty per cent. of whom are the children of Friends or of those connected with the Society. The fees range from £18 to £60,—an average payment of £44, 18s. 7d.,—whilst the annual cost of each scholar is £55, 16s. 10d. The total revenue of the Institution from all sources for the first complete year, as given in the Annual Report for 1810, was £1219, 9s. 9d. In the last Report the figures are £7369, 4s. 6d.

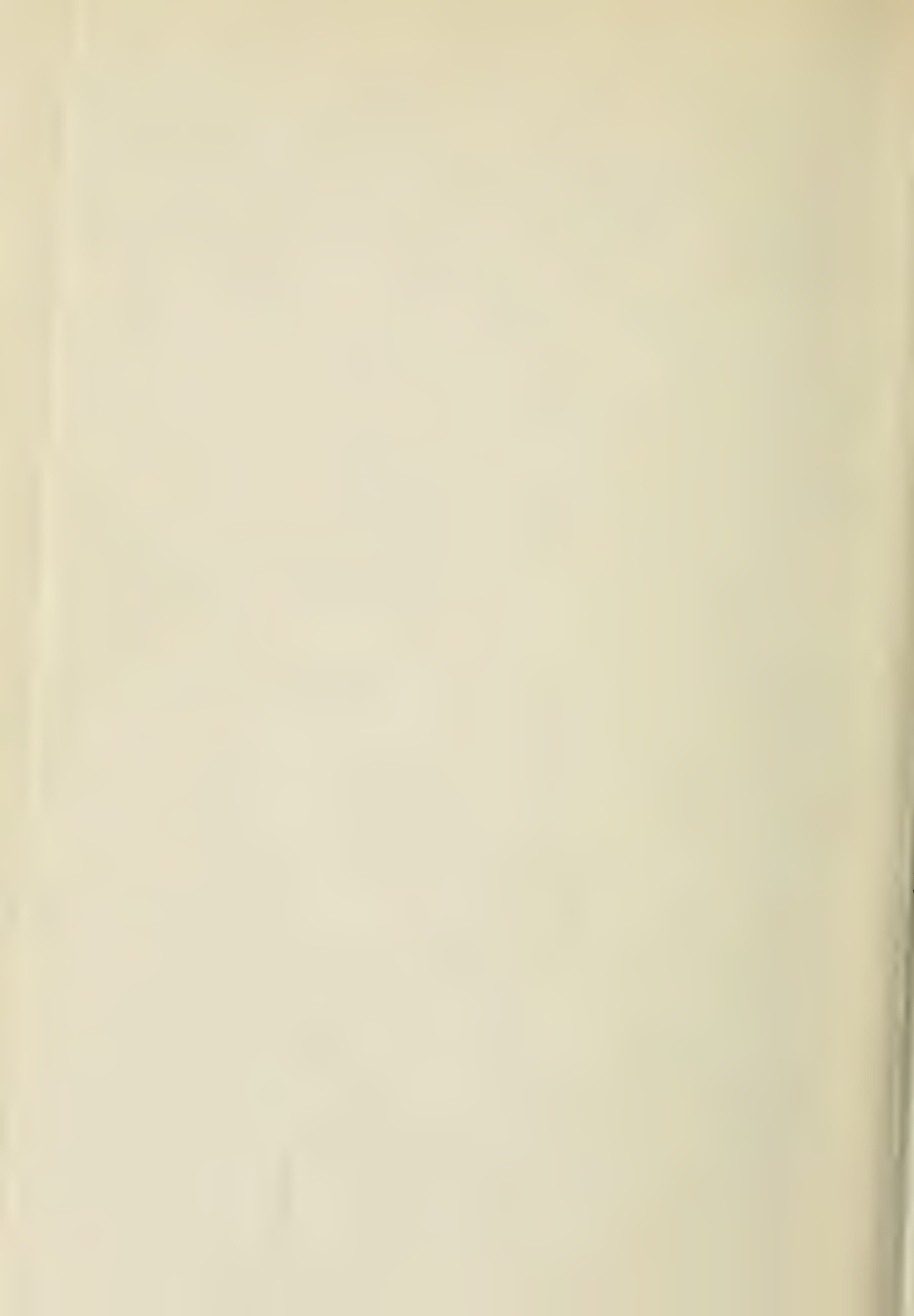
With this increase in revenue, which is due in part to the greater numbers and in part to the higher fees, the expenditure has more than kept pace. Many improvements have been lately made in the equipment. Additions to the Staff, again, and the higher salaries which those who have spent much time and money on professional training have a right to expect, have very considerably raised the annual cost. In the early days of the School's history, when teachers were few, and when those few,—some of whom had failed in other occupations, and had taken to teaching as a last resource,—had been at no expense in fitting themselves for their work, salaries

# GROUND PLAN OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS: MAY 1908.

OLD PORTION MATCHED  
NEW PORTION (PART OF CENTENARY  
BUILDING SCHEME DATING FROM 1902)  
SHOWN IN THICK BLACK







formed an insignificant item in the accounts. For the first complete year, salaries and wages together amounted, in the aggregate, to a few shillings under £40.

But the case is very different to-day, when a teacher must hold both a University Degree and a University Diploma to have any hope of success in what is now fairly styled the Scholastic Profession. To-day the salaries of the teaching-staff alone, not including household salaries, amount to close on £3000, or more than £20 a head for every scholar.

The difficulties of the Committee of Management have, moreover, been greatly increased by a Minute of the Yearly Meeting of 1907, advising Friends' Schools to discontinue the acceptance of Government Grants, a decision which entails on Sidcot School a loss of more than £250 a year. Under these circumstances the want of an adequate endowment has been keenly felt. And in view of the approaching Centenary of the Foundation of the School, strenuous efforts have been made to add to the endowment, and thus to increase the funds at the disposal of the Committee.

During the autumn and spring terms, Lectures are given, usually on Friday evenings, by Friends interested in the School, by members of the Staff, or by paid professional lecturers; and at the same period of the year short addresses on subjects connected with the Society of Friends and with Social Service are sometimes given to the Upper School, on Sunday evenings before the ordinary Reading.

The Sunday Evening Reading, held in the Meeting-house from seven o'clock until eight, has of late years greatly grown in interest and importance, and there is no other feature of school-life of which those who have recently been associated with Sidcot speak with such warm and generous appreciation.

"To me, and, I believe, to most of the boys and girls," writes one who knew it well, "the Sunday Evening Reading seemed the focus of the warmth and light of the higher life of the School. To us younger members of the company, at any rate, it was a service not only of more interest but even

of greater value than the Meeting in the morning; partly because it was essentially a school service, in which both scholars and staff took an active share, and partly in that it was so planned that all, whether older or younger, could follow and understand and appreciate it. This, too, is certain, that many of the best and most helpful lessons learnt at Sidcot have been learnt at those readings, or as a result of what has been heard there."

"I think the way in which I benefited most by the Evening Reading," to quote the words of one who has not long left Sidcot, "was that I used then to feel the fact that Christianity is a practical and living force brought home to me with special power. Examples of men who, realising this, had lived their best for the good of others, were set before us; and to me, as to many of my companions, this was a great stimulus to go and try to do likewise."

"On its influence for good," writes another scholar of recent years, "I feel that I can hardly lay too much stress. Each several feature of the programme had its own particular attraction;—the few well-chosen hymns, the brief Bible-readings, the passage from some interesting and helpful book, the address—which we always regarded as the most important thing of all—an address usually given by the Headmaster, but sometimes by a visitor or by one of the Staff, and founded upon some great man's life, or on a famous picture, or perhaps merely about ourselves and about points of school-life; always clearly put, the story well-told, the advice kindly, or the appeal strongly given; the short silence at the end,—a silence during which many, I believe, 'spoke with God' more really than at any other time.

"The very name brings back some of my happiest recollections of the School. Cricket and football we may get elsewhere. Long country-walks and interesting work can be enjoyed away from Sidcot. But we look in vain for the peaceful, helpful influence, and the deep spiritual charm of the Sunday Evening Reading."



SCHOLARS AND STAFF IN THE SCHOOL'S HUNDREDDTH YEAR





Although there has been no fatal illness within the School precincts during Dr Lean's Head-mastership, a dark shadow was thrown over the community in the summer of 1904, by the death of four Sidcot scholars—of whom, however, only one was a scholar at the time—who lost their lives in a terrible boating disaster on Lough Neagh.

These four, John and Herbert Green, and Frank and Hugh Catchpool, with three companions, Winifred, Frank and Dorothy Green, left Kinnego House, near Lurgan, on the afternoon of the 23rd of August 1904, for a sail in the centre-board boat *Osprey*. Two of the party were familiar with the stormy waters of the lough, and all the boys were skilled in the handling of a boat. It was a perfect summer day. The wind was so light at starting that the party had to row all the way out to their destination at Coney Island, which lies near the south-west angle of the lough between the mouths of the rivers Bann and Blackwater, nine miles to the eastward. While they were on the island the wind got up; and when, at about six o'clock, they set out on their return voyage, it was with a good northerly breeze. But although it was thought wiser, in view of the squally character of the lough, to reef both mainsail and jib, no one on board had the least idea of danger.

At first all went well. But about an hour after starting, the little craft, without a moment's warning, was struck by a heavy squall and laid on her beam ends, and all her occupants were thrown into the water.

All seven were good swimmers, and all promptly regained the boat. But it at once appeared that they were in a most dangerous position. All attempts to right the ship failed. Heavy seas were sweeping over her, and she was constantly submerged by the waves. Serious as their condition was, however, there was no panic among the shipwrecked company. All were cool and collected, and they calmly discussed various plans for trying to secure their safety. The brothers Catchpool at first proposed to swim together to the shore,

with the hope of bringing help to their companions in distress. But in the end it was Frank who made the attempt, and struck out bravely for the land. But the land was three miles away. The sea was running high. And the young hero had covered no more than half the distance, when he sank beneath the waves.

The survivors were in more hopeless case than ever. All attempts to right the boat, or to turn her completely over, failed. Lying as she did, with her sails flat on the water, there was almost nothing to cling to. As each great wave struck her, all six were washed from their precarious hold, sometimes to a distance of several feet; but all swam safely back. Efforts were made to cut away the sails, but the boys were by this time so benumbed with cold that the knives fell from their hands.

The next of the hapless company to disappear was John Green, overcome, no doubt, by cold and exhaustion. Two of the remaining five, Herbert and Frank Green, were hurt in some way by part of the boat's tackle; and after the next great wave, which swept the survivors from their hold, only three, Hugh Catchpool, and Winifred and Dorothy Green, regained the boat. They were close together, but speech was almost impossible, partly because of the noise of the wind and the waves, and partly because all three were worn out with cold and exposure. The one desire of each was that Death would end their misery. None had any fear of it. None had the least hope of reaching land alive. At length came another great wave; and when it had passed, the sisters were alone.

Once more they were washed clear of the boat; and this time Dorothy, the younger sister, unable to hold out longer, "committing her soul to her Saviour, and with her mother's name upon her lips," sank and disappeared.

So perished, in the flower of their youth, six out of the seven comrades; six young people whose lives, only a few short hours before, had seemed, to all who knew them, so full of hope

and promise. What happened afterwards, Winifred Green, the sole survivor of this sad catastrophe, does not clearly remember. For a time she lost consciousness. When she came to herself, the boat had drifted to within half a mile of the shore; and then for the first time the hope that she might, after all, be saved began to dawn on her. At length the boat grounded off Ardmore Point, near the centre of the southern shore of the lough, and Winifred Green made her way to land. It was nearly midnight when the poor girl, having dragged herself, in a half-conscious state, over three-quarters of a mile of most difficult ground, sometimes actually on her hands and knees, reached a farm-house and succeeded in arousing the inmates.

Frank Catchpool was the only one of the ill-fated party who was at the time a Sidcot scholar. He was a boy of singular promise, respected and beloved by his school-fellows, holding the honourable post of senior prefect, distinguished at once for his manly bearing and the gentleness of his disposition, for his studious habits and for his prowess in the games.

His comrades of the Fifth Form proposed to send wreaths to lay upon his grave; but, in deference to the views of Irish Friends, and also with the idea of providing a more lasting memorial, the sum which had been subscribed for the purpose was expended on a copy of Ruskin's "Harbours of England," which had been one of their lost school-fellow's favourite books. With it was bound up a manuscript account of the disaster; while, in a pocket at the end of the volume—which was placed in the School library—is preserved an essay written by Frank Catchpool a few months before his death, and bearing the pathetically suggestive title of "The Sea." In the dining-hall of the School there also hang fine autotype reproductions of "The Days of Creation," "The Sistine Madonna," "Tennyson," and "Sir Galahad," each of which is inscribed

## IN MEMORIAM:

JOHN FREDERICK GREEN.

HERBERT JAMES GREEN.

HUGH W. PETTIFOR-CATCHPOOL.

FRANCIS E. PETTIFOR-CATCHPOOL.

Lough Neagh, 23rd August 1904.

Each several one of that little band, as was proved by their courage and calmness during the events of that disastrous summer day, was cast in heroic mould. None was braver than another. But Sidcot boys and girls, while there are Sidcot boys and girls at all, will remember Frank Catchpool, and his brave, though vain, attempt to battle with that stormy sea. Nor will they forget the words of the Master whom he sought to serve, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

## EPILOGUE

So ends the story of a hundred years. A little School, with its handful of boys and girls and its two teachers, has grown into a great Institution, filled with scholars, officered by a large Staff, and with a name and a memory that are dear to men and women in every corner of the world. Everything about the School has changed. Of the buildings of a century ago not one stone stands upon another. Changed are the costume, the forms of speech, the methods of that elder day. But the School itself is as young and strong and vigorous as ever. The touch of Time has changed the very landscape. Old trees that were landmarks in our youth are gone. Once familiar streams are dry. The years have left their mark on what we fondly call the everlasting hills. But the spirit of the School survives. They are, it is true, but passing generations that occupy the rooms we knew, that fill the places we once filled. But new generations follow. The rooms are still occupied, the places filled. There will be boys and girls while England lasts; and if they but keep unstained the reputation won by their predecessors of other days for honesty of purpose and simplicity of life, for zeal in work and eagerness in play, for skill in handicrafts and for love of Nature and her children, the School will live for ever.

Those who have read through this imperfect record cannot fail to have contrasted the primitive arrangements, the inadequate appliances, the narrow course of study that satisfied the requirements of a century ago, with the improved conditions and well-ordered methods of the present day. Life at Sidcot a hundred years back was rough, its



customs were barbarous, the education provided by it was scant in the extreme. The masters and mistresses had little learning and less training, But with all these drawbacks, there is, in the lives of men and women who, as children, passed through the School, evidence that the work was sound; that the arms which the Sidcot of those far-off days provided for the Battle of Life, although less deftly fashioned and less highly finished, were of the right make and temper.

And as we contrast the completeness and the comparative luxury of the present arrangements with the simplicity and the Spartan conditions of the past, we feel that a heavy responsibility rests on those to whom the lines are fallen in places so much more pleasant than those that their forefathers knew. And when we think of successful Sidcot scholars of other days, and remember the difficulties they struggled through, the hardships they underwent, the slenderness of the education that was offered them, our wonder grows not that they were so few and did so little, but that they were so many and that they accomplished so much.

To-day the work of instruction is in the hands of highly-trained men and women who are not well-educated only, but well-qualified to impart to others what they themselves have learned; whose training has not only stored their memories and enlightened their intellect, but has broadened their views, deepened their insight, quickened their sympathies. The teachers of to-day have had advantages that were undreamed-of in their fathers' time. Let them remember that "Unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more." Let them look to it that their young charges are better equipped than were those of the old régime to play their parts in the Battle of Life.

The scholars of to-day have far higher educational advantages, much more extended privileges, far greater comfort than their predecessors of even fifty years ago. Let them look to it that, if they cannot do more, they at least

achieve no less than those who, with far scantier opportunities, have yet borne themselves not ignobly in the fight. Let them consider what has been accomplished by those who went before; by Sidcot boys who have made names as engineers, painters, doctors, schoolmasters, as manufacturers and men of business, as philanthropists and labourers for the common good.

They were old scholars who made the railway over which every Sidcot boy and girl must travel in coming to or in going home from school. Two other old scholars, succeeding where all other engineers had failed, floated Brunel's "*Leviathan*" *Great Eastern* steamship, once among the Wonders of the World. Another man of mark, a consulting engineer to the British Admiralty, still recalls the fact that he learned his first lessons in Science in a Sidcot class-room. Another old scholar, now a member of the Egyptian Government, was sent for from India by Lord Cromer to undertake works that will be of more benefit to the land of the Pharaohs than all the pyramids that ever were built. The artist whose Alpine landscapes rank to-day above all others of their kind for truth and beauty painted his first pictures for exhibition in Sidcot School. The scientific researches, and the high reputation in the medical world, of another old scholar have lately had their meed of honour in the shape of an important Government appointment. Another scholar is at this moment the able and vigorous Head of one of the English Public Schools. Let the boys and girls of the Sidcot of to-day recall with pride the fact that the man of whom Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, declared that Hungary never could repay the debt she owed him, was once a Sidcot scholar too. And let them never forget that it was a Sidcot boy who, four years ago, taking his life in his hand in the hope—alas! in vain—of bringing aid to his comrades in distress, died like a hero amid the stormy waters of Lough Neagh.

And there have been others—scores of others, hundreds of

others—simple, unassuming, self-denying, upright men and women, who have lived and laboured and died, and who, it may be, have left no sign, but who have brightened not their own hearths alone, but the homes and lives of those about them, of their friends, their neighbours, of the struggling poor, and this, because of the influence of Sidcot School. Sidcot scholars are scattered now in every corner of the world. Let them look to it that each one of them is a source of inspiration to those about him, a pattern of what a good man's life should be: undismayed by difficulty, intolerant of wrong, thinking of others rather than himself, a tower of strength to weaker brethren, honest in his dealings, untarnished in his way of life. In short, let him look to it that he bears about with him, without ostentation, and yet plain for all to see, the hall-mark of the dear old School.

It is a poor way to estimate success in life by measuring it in terms of money. The scholars who have been a credit to the School may or may not have been what common report calls fortunate. They may or may not have made their mark in the world. Well for them if it can be said that they served their fellow-men, that they laboured in the cause of humanity; that it was theirs to right the wrong, to support the weak, to succour the unfortunate, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. In that supreme moment, when he is going down alone into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, when his face is set towards that Bourne from which there is no returning, it is not the breadth of his acres or the state of his bank-book that will matter to a man. What will matter to him then is how his account stands with his Maker; whether or no the record against his name is, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

The century of School-history that has ended has witnessed many changes. The century that is beginning will, it can hardly be doubted, bring greater changes still. There is much still to do. The School must still go forward. For the sake

of its honest aims, for the sake of its strenuous endeavours to mould character aright, for the sake of the traditions of a not inglorious past, for the sake of the sweet air of its encircling hills, it can never hesitate or halt or go back. Each succeeding generation of its scholars, holding fast by its birthright in the old Quaker ideal of directness and simplicity, encouraged and stimulated by the achievements of days that went before, will jealously guard the laurels that the past has won; and, being careful never to think of itself more highly than it ought to think, never to presume to dream that it has attained the ideal after which it strives without ceasing, will, with modest, quiet, manly determination to do the best it can,

Keep the lamp of Truth from dying,  
Keep the flag of Honour flying,  
The old flag of Honour flying on the School.





## INDEX

- Ackworth School, 20, 23, 90, 92, 117,  
140, 141  
age of children on admission, 31, 154,  
312  
air-pump, 89  
Allen, William, 75  
American songs, 172  
—— War of 1812, 121  
—— War of Secession, 173  
analysis of water, 229  
—— taught, 215  
Andrews, Mary, 43  
annuity scheme, 26  
—— paid to Dr Pope and family, 26,  
100, 243-4  
apparatus, scientific, 89, 90, 118, 215  
appeals for money, 27, 131, 143, 299  
apple-trees, 39, 98, 130, 143  
apprentices, 34, 47, 78  
archæology, curatorship, 232, 319  
arithmetic, manuals of, 59  
Arscott, Alexander, 6  
Arts, Society of, 189  
Ashby, Edmund, 245-303  
asphalt, 223-4  
Associated Meetings, their names,  
24, 154, 202  
astronomy, 118, 215  
athletics, 173, 260-1, 316-7  
attainments of scholars, 118-120,  
311-2  
Avenue of lime-trees, 38, 130  
—— Upper, 225  
Axbridge, 9, 149, 151  
Axe, bathing in, 68, 103, 149  
  
badger, 233  
bags as luggage, 184  
  
Baker, William, 138  
balance, adverse, 131, 202, 243  
Ball, Richard, 22  
balloons, fire, 195-6  
band, 315  
Banwell, 9, 14, 123, 224  
Barber, professor of elocution, 116  
barometer, 215  
barring-out, 113, 162-4, 277-9  
Bastin, E. P., 186  
bath, 68, 103, 290-1, 316-7  
bathing in the Axe, 68, 103, 149  
bath-room, 220-1  
Batt, Mary, 85, 104  
—— William, 77-110  
—— Sarah, 85  
Beacham, the conjuror, 71, 72  
Beard, William, 123  
beer, 61, 63  
Benwell, John, 17, 22, 44  
—— school of, 19, 24, 30, 37-8  
—— Joseph, 44  
Bevan, Thomas, 7  
Bevans, John, 55  
Biblical study, 54-6, 134, 142  
bicycle, 121, 273-4  
Bigland, Edwin, 184-90  
—— Percy, 230, 302, 321  
Birnbeck, 123-4  
Bishop of Bath and Wells, 13  
—— Chester, 15  
black-book, 84, 198, 222  
Black Down, 196, 239, 272  
Blacker, Mr, 261  
Black Hole, 150, 222, 287  
blackthorn, 195  
Bland, Lucy, 228  
Blandon, Robartt, 9

- Blank, a starting-point, 82  
 boat-building, 123, 190  
 bonnets, 65, 126, 147  
 books, 54, 59, 60, 90-1, 116, 117, 122, 142, 169, 300  
 botanical notes, 116, 122, 134, 233, 263  
 bounty on punctual return, 109  
 bowling, 193-4, 237  
 box-edging, 161  
 boxes for solitary confinement, 80-1, 150  
 boxing ears, 162  
 boys and girls kept apart, 91, 124-5, 183  
 Bradley, Sarah, 302  
 Bread-and-Butter, 176  
 bread, high price of, 62-3  
 break-up of School on account of illness, 185, 227  
 Brean Down, 263, 265-6, 319  
 breeches, 31, 64  
 Brewin, Charles, 44  
 Bridgwater Estate, 40, 99, 100, 132, 153, 203-4, 243, 298-9  
 Bright, John, 95  
 brimstone and treacle, 19  
 Bristol Friends and Education, 4, 5, 6  
 — communication with, 46, 73  
 — and Exeter Railway, 99, 112, 204  
 Brooks, David, 138  
 brothers and sisters, 91, 183, 254  
 Budget of Literary Society, 188  
 bugle for "assembly," 89  
 building, 69, 177, 246-7, 284-8, 291  
 — leases, 99  
*Bulimus montanus*, 189  
 bullock's heart, 61, 75, 87  
 Burrington cave, 264, 271  
 busts presented, 191  
 butter, 63, 98  
 Cabinet bought, 189  
 Callowhill, Hannah, 8  
 calves' heads, 61  
 Cambridge Local Examinations, 169, 256  
 Cambridge Inspectors, 219, 255-6  
 Camera Club, 320, 322  
 Camps, 323  
 Canal Shares, 100, 153  
 candles, 66, 107  
 Capper, Samuel, 22  
 carpentry, 75, 123, 190, 262  
 catechism, 54-6, 90-1  
 censorship of letters, 74, 112  
 Chadwick, Dr, 186  
 Charleton, Robert, 237  
 Cheddar, 121-2  
 Chemical Society, 143  
 Cherry Orchard, 101  
 chocolate, early purchase of, 62  
 choral practice, 314-5  
 cider, 39  
 cistern, 103, 128  
 Claridge, Richard, 15  
 Clark, James, 1, 103; H. R., 247; Henry Vaughan, 2; Mary Anna, 259; Robert L., 261; Thomas and Fanny, 44, 204  
 Clarke, Joseph, 22; Herbert E., 231  
 class-room, 177  
 clocks, 39, 225  
 clothing, 31-2, 43, 52, 63-5, 126, 147, 203  
 coaches, 73-4, 107  
 coach-hire, 7  
 coach delayed by snow, 23  
 coal, high price of, 63, 152  
 Cockin, Richard, 78  
 cock-warning, 195  
 Coe, Dr, 186  
 Co-education, 246, 253-4, 304-9  
 coffins, so-called, 80-1  
 colchicum, 145  
 collections, Natural History, 122, 143, 188, 232, 263, 319  
 College of Preceptors, 256  
 committee, provisional, 22, 30, 154  
 — the first School, 35, 44, 48, 51, 76, 117, 140-1, 154  
 "Committee Friends," elms so-called, 38-9, 294  
 Compton, Edward T., 190, 281

- Compton, Theodore, 188, 190-1, 230, 261, 295  
 conchological notes, 188-9  
 conduct, rules for, 57  
 Conference of Teachers, 92, 117  
 confinement of refractory boys, 80-1  
 constable for School, 98  
 Constitution, original, 24, 31, 40-1  
 conversazione, 320  
 Conygre Field, 99  
 cookery, 106, 310  
 Cooper, Thomas, 217  
 copper beech, 37  
 copy-holds, 130  
 corduroys, 64  
 Cornwall Works, 139  
 corporal punishment, 80, 83, 111, 125  
 cost, annual, 45, 74, 132, 152, 153, 201-2, 243, 303, 324  
 costume, 31-2, 63, 65, 106, 126, 147, 181-2, 218, 270  
 cricket, 65, 93, 124, 144, 191-3, 210, 214, 219, 220, 237, 269, 321  
 Cross, 73  
 cross-country runs, 322  
 Crouch, John and Margaret, 44, 45  
 cups, 126  
 curatorships established, 188
- Daffodil Valley, 197  
 dandy-horse, 121  
 dark ages, 81-4  
 dark-room, 177, 287  
 Davies, Samuel, 306  
 Davis, Amelia, 279, 282, 302;  
   Thomas, 22  
 Day, William, 129, 224, 302  
 "Dead Schoolfellows," 231-2  
 deaths, 49, 50, 67, 104, 108, 184-6, 227-8, 234-7, 243, 282, 327  
 debt, 86, 131, 202, 299, 303  
 deceased wife's sister, 12  
 deed, trust, of 1809, 40-1  
 Dell, Barton, 76-105  
 Dell, John A., 320  
 departmental teaching, 250-3  
 deportment, rules for, 57  
 desks, 60, 144
- Devonshire, contributions from, 101, 301.  
 diaries of Natural History, 232, 263  
 dietary, 61, 87, 105, 125-6, 146, 180-1, 225-7, 282-3, 323  
 dilapidations, 100  
 dining-room, 246, 288  
 diphtheria, 184-7, 227-9  
 discipline, 46, 59, 79, 104, 112-3, 148, 161, 274  
 disinfection, 282  
 doctors, 68, 69, 108, 127, 186, 228, 282  
 domestic assistant, 85, 187  
 Dorset, 7, 29  
 Dowse, Thomas, 15  
 drainage, 179, 186, 229  
 dramatic representations, 242, 318  
 drawing, 89, 118, 142, 190, 261, 318  
 dress, materials for, 65, 106  
 drilling, 118, 143, 173, 260  
 drinking-water, 66-7, 103, 126, 128, 178-9, 121, 287.  
   — mugs, 106  
 drowning of Frank Catchpool and others, 327-30  
 drowning, two boys contemplate, 149  
 drubbing-days, 183  
 drugs, 69, 127, 128, 133  
 "Duck, Mother," 160-1  
 duties of teachers, 48-9, 51-3  
 Dutton, L. M. Rowe, 320  
 Dymond, Anna Maria, 140; Edith, 160-1, 204; George, 101; Henry, 47, 78, 158-205; Jonathan, 19; Josephine, 204; Margaret, 140; Miriam, 52, 204  
 dynamite, 225
- economy, 61, 74, 87  
 Eddington, A. H., 208, 285  
 education, 3, 4, 9, 12, 18, 54, 57, 58, 88, 105, 116-8, 214  
 electrical apparatus, 89  
 electricity, lectures on, 89  
 Ellis, John D., 50-1  
 elm-trees, 200-1  
 elocution lessons, 116  
 endowment, 24, 298-301

- entertainment by Old Scholars, 241-2  
 entomological notes, 197, 238, 263, 266-7  
 Epistle of Western Yearly Meeting, 6, 7  
 essay-writers, 188, 231  
 estate at Sidcot, 24, 35, 37, 39  
 Eton, 177  
 Euclid, 19  
 Evans, Josiah, 164-8, 206-44; Mary Hannah, 207-8, 214  
 examination, Cambridge Local, 169, 256, 310; College of Preceptors, 256; General Meeting, 175, 219, 220; Inspectors, 140-1, 174, 255-6; London Matriculation, 310; Royal Academy of Music, 312; Needle-work, 312; School, 174, 175, 219; South Kensington, 230, 256-7  
 examiners, see inspectors  
 excursions, 149, 211, 263-4, 266, 319  
 exhibitions, 220, 230-1, 262  
 expenditure, 45, 86-7, 131, 201, 202, 243, 299  
 explosions, 170, 228  
 expulsions, 59, 83, 113, 148  
 eyesight, 337  
 farm, boys work on, 32, 84, 98, 121, 145  
 Faulder, John, 78  
 fees, School, 31, 156, 202, 243, 299, 300-1, 324  
 Feinaigle, C. G., 136-7  
 Feinaigle, G. von, 136  
 Ferris, Eliza, 140, 168; Maria, 85; Thomas, 44  
 financial reform, 247, 298-9, 300  
 fir-cone fights, 196-7, 254  
 fire-balloons, 195-6  
 fire-engine, etc., 292-3  
 fire in dark-room, 170; in laboratory, 291; in Meeting-house, 200  
 fire-works, 268-9  
 first scholar, 40, 42  
 fish, 61  
 Fisher, George, 22  
 Five Acres, 99, 193, 229, 237  
 fives, 93  
 fives-tower, 93, 144, 224  
 flag, 270  
 flags, 67  
 flint and steel, 66, 107, 112  
 floors, stone, 67, 177  
 food, see dietary  
 Forms, institution of, 305  
 Fothergill, Dr, 20; Samuel, 114, 117  
 Fowler, G. J., 258  
 Fox, Francis, 129, 211-2; George, 3  
 Frank, Ann, 135; Arnee, 22; Edith, 52, 85; John, 134-57; Mary, 1, 55, 58; William Arnee, 191, 321  
 French, 89, 142, 156, 169, 215, 311  
 French and English, 195, 288  
 French Prison Bar, 195, 288  
 fretwork, 230  
 Friends near Sidcot, 9  
 — persecution of, 13-5  
 — as purveyors to the School, 107  
 frog in water-pipe, 129  
 Fry and Hunt, 62; Joseph Storrs, 80; Richard, 303  
 Fuller's Pond, 68, 239-40, 291  
 Games, 65, 93, 124, 144, 191, 195-6, 209-10, 214, 237, 269-70, 271, 288, 314, 321-3  
 Garden, Long, 36-8, 98, 130, 145-6, 161, 270, 274, 281, 286, 294, 324  
 gardeners, 84, 121, 145-6  
 gardens, 145, 177, 178, 320  
 gas-works, 129, 223, 283  
 gate, 223  
 Gayner, John, 303  
 General Meeting, 30, 40, 57, 76, 108, 127, 175-6, 219, 220  
 geography, Barton Dell's, 88, 90  
 geology, 215, 217, 226, 263  
 geometry, 118  
 ghost, the Sidcot, 71-2  
 Gilkes, Benjamin, 110-32; Ann, 110-11  
 Gilpin, Charles, 94-6; Joseph S., 1  
 girl carrying board on her head, 118  
 girls and boys kept apart, 91, 124-5, 183

girl known as "the forty-nine," 125  
 girls' games, 66, 124, 214, 271  
 Glastonbury Estate, 39, 202; Railway  
   shares, 204  
 globes presented, 39  
 Goodridge, William, 14  
 Goouch, Benjamin, 208, 231  
 Government Grant, 257, 312, 325  
 gown worn by boys, 181-2  
 Grace, John, 22; Abraham, 297  
 graduates on the Staff, 136, 208, 309  
 grammar, 88, 90, 116, 143, 169  
 Grand Surrey Canal Shares, 100, 244  
*Great Eastern Steamship*, 139  
*Great Western Steamship*, 92  
 Green, J. J., 230  
 Gregory, Lydia, 49, 50, 87;  
   Margaret, 147; Robert, 49, 70  
 Griffiths, John, 17  
 Grubb, Edward, 116  
 surgeons, 106  
 gymnasium, 260  
 gymnastic appliances, 224; training,  
   173, 260-1, 316-7  
  
 Hale Well, 67, 103, 128, 238, 265  
 Hallam, Edward, 127, 235  
 Halliday, E., 262  
 Ham, Joseph, 121, 273  
 handwriting, 88, 171-2  
 Harborough, 242, 270  
 Harding, Robert, 84  
 hardships, 121, 148-9, 221-2  
 Harrison, George, 21  
 hats, 64, 126, 147  
 Havvatt Estate, 99, 242  
 Head-master, former functions of,  
   297-8  
 Head-masters, list of, 34  
 health, see illness  
 heating-apparatus, 105, 148-9, 285  
 henge, 61-2  
 Higgins, William, 45-6, 235  
 Higginson, Edward, 15  
 highwayman, 128  
 hockey, 195, 271  
 holidays, 31, 76, 108, 184, 283  
 homœopathy, 187

horse stealing from boxes, 289  
 Howard Association, 115-6  
 Hughes, William, 40  
 Huntley & Palmers, 79.  
  
 Ilchester Gaol, 14  
 illness, 68-9, 108, 127, 147, 184-7,  
   227-9, 281, 323-4  
 Impey, R. L., 190, 281  
 improvements, 128-9, 151-2, 177,  
   178, 179, 180, 220-1, 222-3, 225,  
   229, 246-9, 284-9, 291, 304-5  
 income falling, 25, 27, 28, 77, 86,  
   131, 153, 201, 243, 299, 301  
 infectious hospital, 281  
 influenza, 127  
 inspectors, 140-1, 174, 255-6, 312  
 insubordination, 59, 79, 112-3, 148,  
   162-4  
 inwards, 62  
 ipecacuanha, 133  
 Isaac, James, 22  
 "Island," the, 321  
  
 Jackson, General, 121; Stewart, 219  
 Jenkins, William, 9-17  
 Jewess, Eliza Salome, 140  
 jews'-harp, 89, 118  
 Joint-Teaching, 253-4  
 Jones, Richard, 10  
 Jubilee of Literary Society, 268  
*Juvenile Miscellany*, 92  
 Juvenile Society, 93-4, 122  
  
 Kensington, South, see South Ken-  
   sington  
 Kidborough, 124  
 Kidder, Bishop, 13  
 kitchen, girls help in, 33  
 Kitching, William, 164  
 kites, 144, 195  
 Knight, H. F., 188  
 knighthood conferred on Richard  
   Tangye, 140  
 knives and forks cleaned, 32, 127  
 Knollis, Colonel, 37  
 Kossuth, 96  
  
 laboratory, 143, 155, 170, 215, 228,  
   285-7, 292



- lamps, 66, 107  
land acquired: Bridgwater, 40, 99, 242, 297-8; Combe, 204; cottages, 203, 297, 324; Five Acres, 37; Glastonbury, 39; Harborough, 242; Havyatt, 99; Long Acre, 37; Longfield, 270; Middle Field, 37; Mouzney, 99, 242-3; North Field, 39; Pattenham, 98; Sidcot Lodge, 204; Twynnard's Mead, 37; Winterhead Hill, 297  
Lane, J., 247  
lantern, 216  
Latin, 54, 89, 118, 252, 256, 311  
Latten Schools, 8  
laundry, 33, 285  
laundry-woman singing, 58  
lawn tennis, 270-1  
Lawrence, H., 208, 248; John, 208, 232, 237, 240  
lead-pencils, 60, 92  
Lean, Dr Bevan, 304-330  
Lecture Mania Company, 215  
Lectures, 111, 170-1, 215, 217, 218, 325  
Lees, R., 137  
leisure pursuits, 92, 114, 116, 143, 229-30, 232, 261-5, 318-9  
Leslie, Adelaide, 187  
letters, censorship of, 74, 112; postage of, 74, 107-8, 112; odd addresses of, 136, 138.  
library, 60, 90, 117, 122, 142, 188  
licence for keeping school, 13  
Lidbetter, Martin, 78, 113; R. M., 208  
lime-trees, 38, 130  
Lindley Murray, 88-9, 116, 143, 169  
line, standing to, 198, 211  
Literary Society, 93-5, 121, 144, 187-9, 231-3, 266-8, 318-9  
Literature, English, 209, 214-5  
loans, 202  
log tied to boy's leg, 88  
Logan, James and Patrick, 5, 6  
Longfield, 44, 270, 297-8  
Long Garden, 36-8, 98, 130, 145-6, 161, 270, 274, 281, 286, 294, 324  
Long Sutton, 8  
Lough Neagh, 321, 327-30  
lucifer matches, 107, 112, 143  
Macintosh, 217  
mad-ball, 196  
map of estate, 36 -  
maps, 190  
Marie Antoinette, 123  
matches, cricket, 191-3, 180  
matches for lighting, 66, 107, 112, 143  
materials for dress, 65, 106  
matron, 85, 187, 282, 302  
Maxmills, 197, 237, 263, 265  
Mayne, John, 43  
meals, 61, 105-6, 126, 127, 146, 180, 207-11, 225-7, 283, 323  
Mechanical Society, 320  
medicine, see drugs  
Meeting, see Bridgwater, etc.  
Meeting, General, see General Meeting  
Meeting-house, 30, 70-3, 199, 200, 225  
Megahy, B. P., 247  
mensuration, early mention of, 54  
meteorological apparatus, 215, 233-4, 319  
meteor-shower, 234  
Metford, Samuel, 236  
microscope, 143, 215-6  
Midnight Touring Society, 271-3  
milestone pudding, 135  
milk, price of, 63  
mining near Sidcot, 224  
models of ships, 123, 190  
monitors, 47-8  
Moore, Elizabeth, 135-6; Thomas, 138  
moral tone, see tone  
Morris's "Birds," 188  
Motley, Joseph, 204  
Mother Duck, 160-1  
Mouzney Estate, 99, 242-3  
mugs of pewter, 126  
Murray's Grammar, 59, 88-9, 116, 143, 169  
music, 89, 118, 172-3, 218, 258-60, 314-6

- musical instruments: bugle, 89;  
guitar, 173, 218; harmonium,  
295; jews'-harp, 89, 118; piano,  
258-60, 314  
mustard, price of, 62  
Mutual Improvement Society, 95, 122  
Naish, John, 22; Joseph, 22, 46, 49  
Natural History, 116, 122-3, 166,  
187-9, 197, 210, 232-3, 237-9, 263-  
7, 319-20  
Nature Study, 264-5, 313  
needlework, 118-9, 317-8  
Newman, Dr George, 186  
newspapers, 92, 142-4  
nicknames, 182-3  
Nigh, John, 67, 130  
night-caps, 31, 147  
night-shirts, 31-2, 106  
Norris, Samuel, 43  
North Field, 39  
number of scholars, 42, 105, 152, 154,  
201, 242-3, 303, 324  
number 9, 182  
number given to each scholar, 150, 182  
nurses, 69, 127, 309  
Oak in Long Garden, 39, 161  
Oakridge, 44, 199, 235  
occupations of scholars, 32-3  
Odyssey, quotation from, 62  
officer's library, 117  
offices, 126-7, 227  
Old Scholars' Association, 240-2,  
279-81, 298, 316, 318  
opening of Cheddar Valley Railway,  
211-2  
— of the School, 42  
oratorios at Wells, 315-6  
orchards, 38-9, 99  
ornithological notes, 233, 238-9, 263  
Osmond, Sarah Ann, 187  
Owen, John, 15  
ox-goad, 74  
oxygen and diphtheria, 228  
painting, 114, 189-90, 230, 261, 318  
Palmer, George, 94, 96, 97; William,  
92, 97  
Palmiter, Lavington, 73  
paper, price of, 60, 91  
parsimony, 61, 87  
partitions, 180  
patten-marks, 58  
pattens, 32  
Pattenham, 98-9, 193, 237  
pavilion, 270, 297  
Pawlett, 99  
Peace, lecture on, 217-8  
Pearse, Mr, 261  
Pease, Thomas, 133  
pencil-case, story of, 254-5  
Pengelly, William, 141-2, 168,  
173-4  
Penn, William, 8  
penny a week, 31, 331  
pens, 60-1, 91-2  
pensions, 301-2  
pepper, price of, 62  
pepper-corn rent, 70, 114  
periodicals published in the School,  
92, 143-4, 324  
persecution of Friends, 13-5  
pewter mugs, 106  
phantasmagoria, 110  
Photographic Society, 320  
photography, 177, 287, 320  
physical training, 173, 260-1, 316-7  
pianos introduced, 258-60  
pickle-room, 220  
pictures, 321  
Pig-Driver, the, 162  
pig-drives, 143, 210  
pigs, 62, 98  
pills, 69  
pipes for water-supply, 129, 179, 221,  
240  
Pitman, Jane, 85, 104  
plan of school in 1815, 36  
playing-field, 98-9, 196, 237, 270, 297  
playground, 66, 223-4, 291  
playing-shed, 37, 144, 177, 288, 289  
please, objection to use of word,  
218-9  
pocket-money, 31, 59, 151  
poor Friends, children of, 11, 26, 40,  
300

- Pope, quotation from, 62  
 Pope, Dr, annuity, 26, 100, 153,  
     243-4  
 port-wine, 63  
 postage, 74, 77, 108, 112  
 post-office, 37, 74  
 potato-digging, 84, 98  
 pounce, 61  
 Preceptors, College of, 256, 258  
 prefects, 304  
 presentation to E. Ashby, 302  
 prices, 60, 62, 107  
 printing-press, 92  
 prizes, 82, 257  
 property of the School, 24, 35, 36-8,  
     39, 40, 98-100, 132, 154, 179, 202,  
     203-4, 242, 297-8, 302-3  
 prospectus of John Benwell, 18  
 provisions, prices of, 60, 62, 107  
 pudding, as love-token, 183  
 puddings, 146, 180-1, 226  
 pump, 67, 89  
 punishment, 80-1, 82-3, 125, 150, 198  
  
 Quarterly Meeting, 6, 8-10, 22-3, 29  
  
 Railway, 99, 112, 204, 211-4  
 rates of admission 31, 156, 202-3,  
     234, 299, 300-1, 324  
 reading aloud, 57, 116-7, 172-4  
 reading on Sunday evening, 91, 120,  
     135, 294-6, 325-6  
 rebellion, 162-4  
 re-building of School, 101-3  
 recitations, 172, 231  
 Redfern, Jane, 214  
 reminiscences, 55, 58, 81-4, 148-50,  
     166-7, 248-50, 254-5, 266-7, 274-9,  
     287-8  
 repairs to clothing, 64, 243  
 Reports, 1, 51, 57, 59, 63, 131, 189,  
     229, 319  
 resurrection-pie, 180  
 retrenchment, 74, 86-7  
 Reynolds, Richard, 22; the brothers,  
     281  
 Ricketts, Mary, 1, 55, 58  
 right of way, 67, 103, 221, 286  
  
 robberies, 98, 145, 201  
 roller, stone, 39  
 roof damaged by storms, 104  
 Rose Cottage, 37, 99, 114, 130  
 rounders, 195  
 Rowberrow, 9, 234  
 rules for conduct and deportment, 57.  
 Rules of the School, 31  
 rum, 63, 74  
 Russell, Mary, 85  
 Russels otherwise Mannory, 38  
 Rutter, R. B., 296  
  
 salaries, 43-4, 45, 75, 104-5, 114, 132,  
     303, 324-5  
 Salome, Eliza, 140  
 sanatorium, 281  
 Sanderson, T. J., the Rev., 255-6  
 Sandford, 122-3, 272  
 sanitary inspection, 186  
 Saturday half-holiday, 33, 314  
 Sayer, Samuel, 14  
 Scantlebury, Robert, 12-3  
 scarlet fever, 68, 108, 127, 147, 187,  
     227, 282  
 scholar, the first, 40, 42  
 scholarships, 257-8, 301, 312  
 School at Ackworth, 20, 23, 90, 92,  
     117, 140-1; at Ayton, 140-1;  
     Bristol, 4-6; Cross, 237; Croydon,  
     140-1; Fearnhead, 117; Hemel  
     Hempstead, 21; Kendal, 21;  
     Penketh, 21, 117, 140-1; Rawdon,  
     117, 140-1; Shacklewell, 3; Skip-  
     ton, 21; Sibford, 140; Waltham,  
     3; Weston-super-Mare, 192, 237;  
     Wigton, 140; Worcester, 21;  
     Yealand, 21  
 science, 52, 89, 110, 115, 143, 170-1,  
     215-6, 257, 312-3  
 science school, Sidcot a, 257  
 scientific apparatus, 89, 90, 118, 215  
 Scoryer, Robert, 15  
 Scott, M. Winifred, 320  
 scripture, 54, 120, 142; reading, 91,  
     120, 159  
 Seaman, Mrs, 282  
 Sessions, Frederic, 297

- sewing, 32-3, 118-9, 317-8  
 Shacklewell, 3  
 Shakespeare, 88  
 Sharp, John, 188-9, 208-9  
 shed, see playing-shed  
 sherry, 63  
 shinty, 195  
 shipbuilding, 123, 190  
 Shipham, 145  
 shoes, 64  
 sick-rooms, 127, 185  
 Sidcot, first allusion to, 9  
 Sidcot Lodge, 74, 204  
 Sidcot Meeting, 11, 16-7, 30, 71, 150,  
     199, 234, 295, 296-7  
 Sidcot, various spellings of, 8, 9, 12  
*Sidcot Times*, 92, 144; *Teetotaller*, 92;  
     *Quarterly*, 281  
 Simpson, Robert, 42  
 singing, 58, 89, 172-3, 218, 314-5  
 skating, 239-40  
 slates, 50, 171  
 slides, 291  
 small-pox, 108, 227  
 Smith, M. E., 169; Till Adam, 192,  
     237  
 solitary confinement, 80-1, 150, 222  
 Solomon Trew, 111  
 songs, American, 172; School, 285  
 South Kensington Examination, 230,  
     256-7  
 specimen-glasses for flowers, 122  
 specimens for General Meeting, etc.,  
     171-2, 219-20  
 spelling, 169  
 spoons, 39, 105, 126  
 Staff, 33, 43, 75, 105, 309  
 standing to the line, 198, 211  
 Steele, Richard, 4, 5  
 Stephens, Joseph, 145  
 stocking-mending, 32  
 stone for building, 101; floors, 67,  
     103; trough, 68  
 storms, 104, 130-1, 293-4  
 Story, Samuel, 11  
 Strode, Charles, 64, 71, 99; George,  
     67  
 Strong, S. H., 190  
 study, course of, 32, 54, 142-3, 169-  
     70, 215, 310-1  
 studies, 244, 285, 289, 309  
 Sturge, W. H., 262; Jacob P., 19;  
     Joseph, 19, 97, 321; Matilda, 297  
 subscriptions, 23-4, 25, 27-8, 77, 86,  
     131, 153, 201, 243, 299, 301  
 subsidy to William Jenkins's school,  
     9-11  
 sugar, price of, 62  
 Sunday evening reading, 91, 120, 135,  
     294-6, 325-6  
 sun-dial, 73  
 superintendents, list of, 34  
 survey of buildings, 100  
 Swedish drill, 260  
 swimming, 103, 179, 261, 290-1,  
     316-7  
 swimming-bath, 151-2, 179, 261,  
     285, 288, 291, 316-7  
 Tallack, Thomas, 36; William, 115-  
     6, 138  
 Tangye, George, 139, 242, 257, 274,  
     284-5; James, 317, 319; Richard,  
     1, 138-40, 144-5, 242, 257-8, 274,  
     284-5  
 Tanner, Abraham, 235; Arthur and  
     Margaret, 235, 320; Mary, 120,  
     147, 150, 235; Thomas, 235-6;  
     William, 6, 120-1, 139, 234  
 Taw, Mary Oliver, 50  
 tax-collector, 111  
 Taylor, Daniell, 7  
 tea, 62, 226-7, 283  
 teacher and boys, 165, 210  
 teachers, anecdotes of, 48-9, 51-3, 79-  
     80, 136, 164-8, 208-9, 248-50  
 teachers' conference, 92, 117  
 — meals, 180, 207  
 telescope, 143, 215-6  
 tennis introduced, 270  
 Terms, 283-4  
 thefts, 145, 201, 289  
 Thomas, Arthur, 12; George, 177,  
     204, 237  
 Thompson, George and Edwin, 190;  
     Gilbert, 14-5; Sarah, 227-8

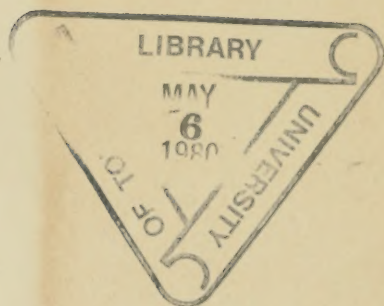
- Thornton, Philip, 137  
 Thorp, Fielden, 256  
 tithes, 14, 98  
 tone of the School, 124, 148, 199,  
     210-1, 296  
 Toppin, John, 4  
 train-hire, 112  
 training of teachers, 309-10  
 train stopped by boys, 211-4  
 travel, methods of, 73-4, 107  
 treasurer, balance due to, 86, 131,  
     243  
 treasurers, list of, 34  
 Tregelles and Fox, 129  
 trigonometry, 28, 54  
 trophies, 316-7  
 trousers, 31, 64  
 trust-deed, 40-1  
 tunnel, 211-4  
 turnip, raw, 146  
 two hours' confinement, 198  
 Twynnard's Mead, 37, 154  
 Tylor, J. S., 189  
  
 "umberella," 147  
 uniform not prescribed, 63  
  
 vacation, 31, 76, 108, 184, 283  
 Veale, J. E., 133-4  
 veterans, 82-3  
 visitors discouraged, 154  
  
 Wade, Dr, 108, 127-8, 282  
 wages of servants, 45, 146  
 waiters and helpers, 227  
 walks, 196-8, 210, 237-9, 265, 271  
 Waltham, 3  
  
 Wansborough, Elizabeth, 43  
 War, Anglo-American, 121; Franco-  
     German, 217-8; of Secession, 173  
 washing accommodation, 68, 152,  
     155, 220, 222  
 wash of chrome, 166  
 water-cart, 68, 103  
 water-pipes, 129, 240  
 water red-hot, 216  
 water-spout, 234  
 water-supply, 66-7, 103, 128, 178-9,  
     221, 286  
 well at the School, 66-7  
 Well, Hale, 67, 103, 128  
 Wells, 315, 319  
 Western Quarterly Meetings, 22  
 Whalley, Thomas, 47  
 Wheeler, Anna, 85; Edmund, 59,  
     171, 216  
 whistling, 83  
 Willis, Timothy, 14, 70  
 Wiltshire, appeal for schoolmaster, 7  
 Winscombe, Meeting at, 9  
 Winterhead, 113, 297  
 women on Committee, 30  
 wood-carving, 262  
 workshop, 75, 123, 177, 190, 262,  
     317  
 Wright, Matthew, 22  
 Wrington, Meeting at, 9  
 writing, hand-, 88, 171-2  
 Wylde, Mary, 49-50  
  
 Yatton, 17  
 Yearly Meeting, 6, 7, 21, 30, 55, 312,  
     325  
 Yeates, John, 15



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